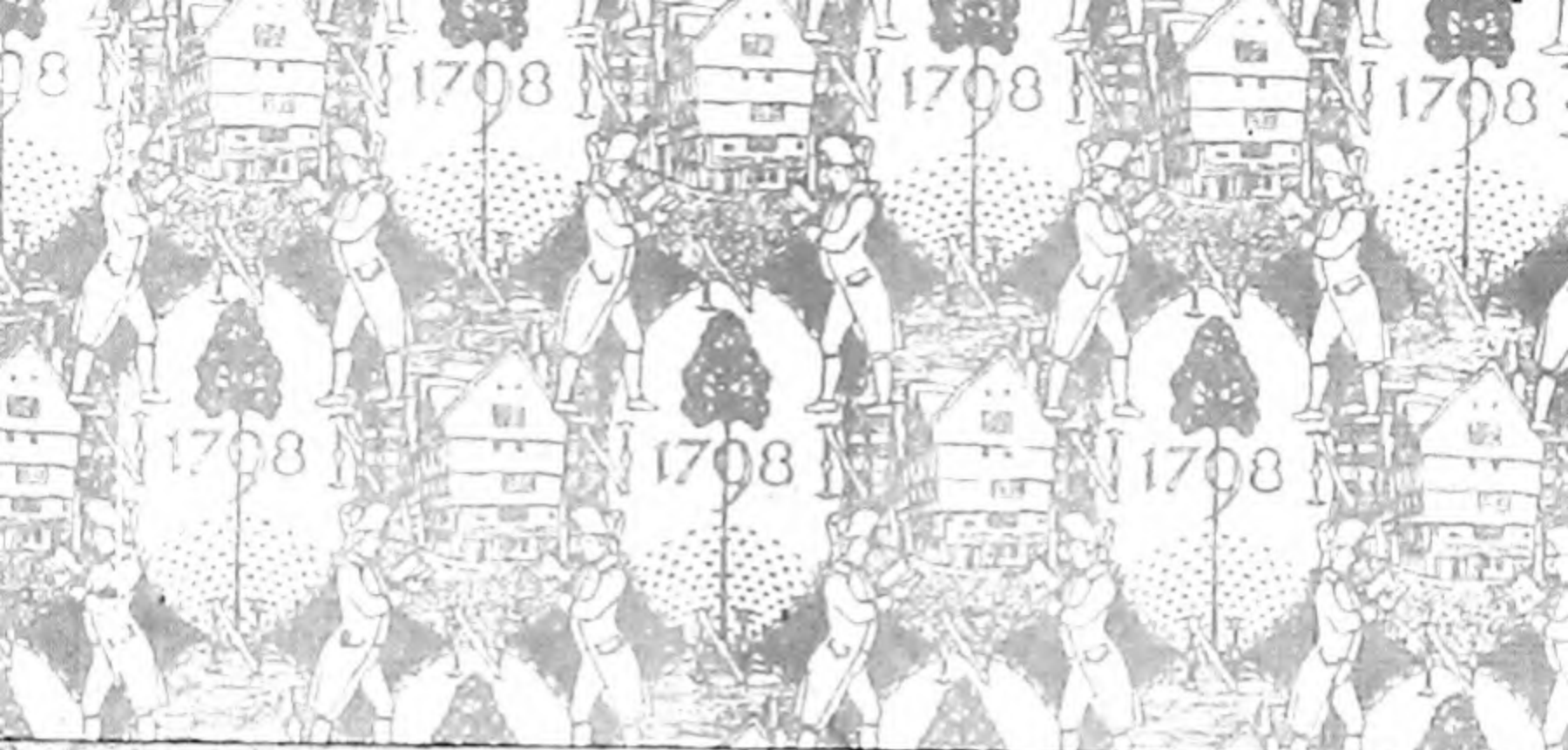


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*General Editor*—DR. RICHARD WILSON



**THE STUDY OF POETRY**

*Caliph.* Ah, if there shall ever arise a nation whose people have forgotten poetry or whose poets have forgotten the people, though they send their ships round Taprobane and their armies across the hills of Hindostan, though their city be greater than Babylon of old, though they mine a league into the earth or mount to the stars on wings—what of them?

*Hassan.* They will be a dark patch on the world.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER.



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THE  
STUDY OF POETRY

— A Literary Supplement —

By  
A. R. ENTWISTLE, B.A.



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## PREFACE

My purpose in offering this little book is to help those classes in English Literature which are sorely handicapped by the lack of a good class library. I have concentrated chiefly on those aspects of poetry study which usually receive scant treatment in general text-books: to such text-books the present work should serve as a useful supplement.

Unless the English master is prepared to emulate the worthy Dominie Sampson, and to stagger to his classes under a prodigious load of books, his lessons must often suffer when his pupils are more or less ignorant of the elements of poetics, and are unprovided with illustrations which even the best equipped master cannot always carry in his head. Wherever possible, illustrative passages consist of complete poems or of extracts sufficiently long to enable the reader to arrive at just estimates. The custom of judging a poet's work from the quality of single lines or brief quotations is obviously unsound; the final estimate of any work of art must be based on an examination of the whole as well as of the parts.

From the success the book has already had (in the form of notes) with my own pupils, I have reason to believe that it will entice not a few timidly inquisitive minds into the "many-splendoured" palace of English scholarship, where royal rewards often await those who least expect them.

In spite of its slender proportions the book is considerably indebted to a large number of authorities. In particular, I must mention Mr. Alden's *An Introduction to Poetry*, Professor Grierson's *Background of English Literature*, Professor Charlton's *The Art of Literary Study*, and Professor Hudson's *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* and his *Outline of English Literature*.

I am also indebted to the following poets and publishers for their courtesy in allowing me to include copyright poems:



Mr. Wilfrid Meynell for three poems by Francis Thompson ; Messrs. Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd., for *Fleet Street*, by Shane Leslie ; Miss Evelyn Underhill and Messrs. Dent for *Immanence* ; Mr. W. B. Yeats for *When You are Old* ; Mr. A. E. Waite for *At the End of Things* ; Messrs. Longmans, Green, and Co., Ltd., for *Honour*, by Eva Gore Booth ; Mr. Basil Blackwell for *Quiet*, by Joan Spencer Muirhead ; Messrs. Macmillan and Co., Ltd., for *Margaritæ Sorori*, by W. E. Henley ; Mr. John Murray and Captain L. Cranmer Byng, for *They gather Lilies down the Stream*.

The diagram on pp. 90-91 is the work of two of my own pupils, Muriel Howes and J. P. Harvey, whose presence in my English classes has been a constant source of encouragement.

Two friends, Mr. F. J. Weaver and Mr. F. S. Robinson—the one as instigator, the other as aider and abettor—must bear some of the responsibility for what follows. I sincerely hope they may have no cause to deplore their complicity.

A. R. E.

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# TO THE STUDENT

## Looking Ahead

ONE of the most pressing problems you will have to face as you grow older will be to find satisfactory substitutes for the things which make for your joys and pleasures to-day. That searching time will come when you make the novel discovery that your happiness so far has not been *your* problem at all, but the problem of others—your parents, your school, your town, the state itself. From your infancy they have made provision for your parties, your games, your outings and your holidays, all of which you have taken as a matter of course. It will be worth your while to give a thought now and then to the time when you will have to take stock of your own resources of happiness. For some time yet, let us hope, you will have your games ; but these will diminish in strenuousness all too soon as you grow “ shorter in wind ” and, perhaps, “ rheumatic in shoulder.” Certainly, the pleasures into which you throw yourselves with such admirable zest to-day will gradually cease to attract you, and you will have to cast about for quieter joys. You will be none the worse for facing this problem now, and for the following reason. Many of the sustaining joys to which mature minds turn like plants to the sunlight are not to be acquired in a hurry. Many a young man has said to himself : “ Yes, I mean to slog away at my ledgers or at my profession until I have enough to retire on. Then I mean to enjoy life.” But often, in the end, he makes a belated and tragic discovery. He

finds that Literature, Art, Science, Archæology, and the rest have nothing to say to him. Such happiness as they bring must be cultivated slowly and persistently, and he is too old and too tired to begin. The pathetic consequences of this lack of instruction or foresight are to be seen in every town and village in the land, where men of the sterner sort, unwilling to face the misery of retirement, work on to the last gasp, while others are reduced to the most unworthy shifts to escape from the unending boredom of their days. Boredom ! that is the enemy we must all combine to banish from our lives. It has spoilt more lives than any war and broken more hearts than any passion. It has made weak men despicable and strong men dangerous. Fortunately you have strong allies against such an enemy, and it is in the hope that many of you will seek an early alliance with literature that this little book has been written.

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# THE STUDY OF POETRY

## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF POETRY

"Let us not judge life by its number of breaths, but by the number of times that breath is held, or lost, either under a deep emotion caused by love, or when we stand before an object of interest or beauty."

W. H. DAVIES.

"J'ai dit ce que je sais et ce que j'ai souffert."

*The Poet.*

"If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their thoughts,  
Their minds, and muses on admired themes ;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit ;  
If these had made one poem's period,  
And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness,  
Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,  
Which into words no virtue can digest."

MARLOWE.

THERE is an infinite variety about definitions of Poetry. Many of them are arresting and significant; not one is completely satisfactory, and taken together they are apt to be bewildering. Without attempting to frame a definition, we shall find it useful to have before us a list of those characteristics which are to be found in most great poetry.

1. Poetry is an Art.
2. It is primarily concerned with human experiences.



3. These experiences must have more than a temporary or local interest ; they must possess *universality*.

4. The language must be musical, or, as some would insist, metrical.

5. The experiences must be such as to arouse emotion.

6. The experiences must be enriched by the imagination.

While it would be presumptuous to deny the title of Poetry to any poem which fails to satisfy *all* the above tests, a careful examination of most poetry of recognized excellence will reveal the presence of all these qualities.

### *Poetry is an Art.*

Like other artistic people, the poet has a keener eye and a keener sensibility for beauty in form, action, or thought than his fellows. But without his Art he would remain dumb, or at most ineffective. It is this that enables him to satisfy an ever urgent desire to represent in an effective, permanent, and pleasing form what he sees or feels or knows. Many of us feel deeply ; but unless our feelings are so expressed as to arouse emotion and lasting pleasure in others we are not poets. It might be argued that there is no need to insist on the necessity for Art as an element of Poetry. If all the other elements are there, we might say Art is there also. The test may be this : Is the total effect pleasurable, whether the theme in itself be beautiful or grotesque, joyful or sad ? It is the special function of Art to see that pleasure will result.

### *Poetry and Human Experiences.*

Although we must insist on Art as an essential element of good Poetry, we must not be beguiled by the cry of " Art for art's sake." The world's great poets,

says Professor Hudson, "have always recognized that Poetry is made out of life, belongs to life, exists for life." Matthew Arnold affirms that "the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live." Landor puts the matter forcibly: "A pretty sonnet may be written on a lambskin or on a parsnip, there being room enough for truth and tenderness on the edge of a leaf or the tip of an ear; but a great poet must clasp the higher passions breast high, and compel them in an authoritative tone to answer his interrogatories."

All this would seem at first to exclude many fine compositions from the realm of poetry. In reality this is not so. The best descriptive poetry rarely fails to reveal to the careful reader the qualities of the poet's mind and personality, *i.e.* his own attitude towards *life*.

### *The Universal Appeal of Poetry.*

One of the most remarkable things about the great writers of antiquity is that they appear to be so modern in their outlook. What we really mean is that they are both ancient and modern at the same time. There are certain things in life that time cannot stale. *Hamlet* has recently been played in modern dress, an experiment that has met with extraordinary success. Why is this? Surely it is because great poetry is concerned with those feelings and thoughts which are innate and unchanging in human nature, and continue to resist the assaults of time and the vagaries of fashion.

Let me, by way of illustration, quote three poems written in ages and lands remote from one another both in time and place. One is by the great Greek dramatist, Euripides (fourth century B.C.); one by Ausonius of Bordeaux (fourth century A.D.), and the other by Li Po, a Chinese poet of the eighth century A.D. The same themes reappear in the poetry of the Eliza-



bethans, and the poets of our own day still find in them a source of inspiration.

(a) " Happy he, on the weary sea,  
 Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven,  
     Happy whoso hath risen, free,  
 Above his striving. For strangely graven  
     Is the orb of life, that one and another  
     In gold and power may outpass his brother.  
     And men in their millions float and flow  
 And seethe with a million hopes as leaven ;  
     And they win their Will, or they miss their Will,  
     And the hopes are dead or are pined for still ;  
     But whoe'er can know,  
     As the long days go,  
 That to live is happy, hath found his heaven."

*Translated by GILBERT MURRAY.*

(b) " O Nature, how we weep to see  
     The flowers' beauty fall !  
 You spread your gifts before our eyes  
     Then snatch them swift away ;  
 How long is the red rose's life ?  
     It liveth but a day.  
 To budding roses comes old age,  
     The sun that dawning red  
 Saw rosebuds fresh, returning late  
     At even sees them dead.  
 Maids, pluck your roses while they bloom,  
     While you are young and gay ;  
 Remember, as the roses fade  
     So hastes your youth away."

(c) " They gather lilies down the stream,  
 A net of willows drooping low  
 Hides boat from boat ; and to and fro  
 Sweet whispered confidences seem  
     'Mid laughing trills to flow.  
  
 In the green deeps a shaft of gold  
 Limns their elaborate attire ;  
 Through silken sleeves the winds aspire,  
 Embalmed, to stray, and, growing bold,  
     Swell them to their desire.

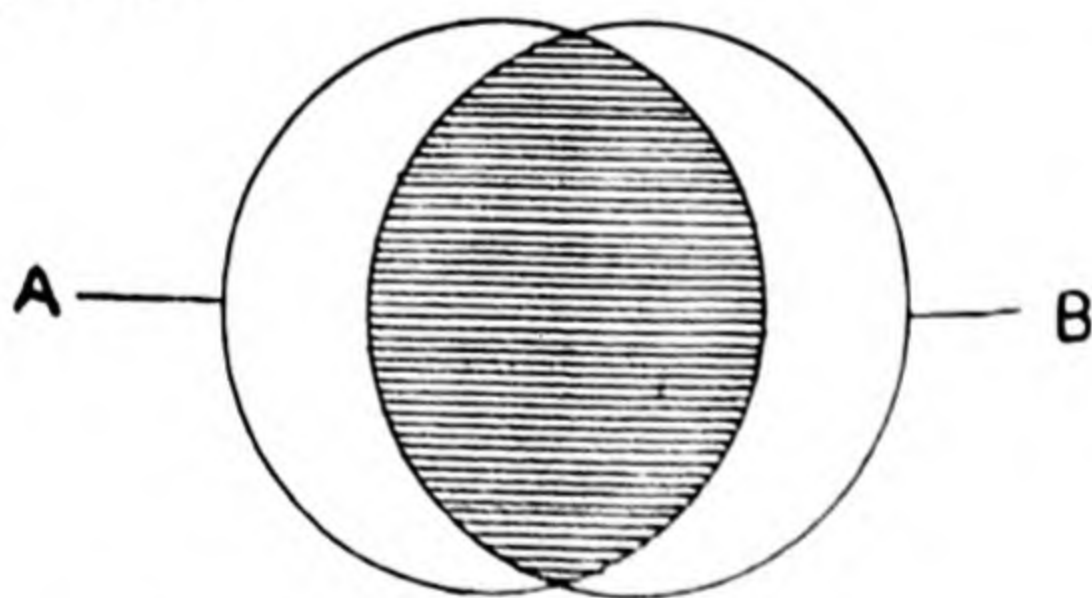
But who are these, the cavaliers,  
That gleam along the river side ?  
By three, by five, they prance with pride  
Beyond the willow-line that sheers  
Over the trellised tide.

A charger neighs ; one turns to start,  
Crushing the kingcups as he flies,  
And one pale maiden vainly tries  
To hush the tumult in her heart  
And veil the secret of her eyes."

*Translated by L. CRANMER-BYNG.*

### *The Music of Poetry.*

To most people the term Poetry implies metrical form. For others the two need not necessarily co-exist. Thus a distinction is made between matter and form, between literature which is poetical in theme but prosaic in form and literature which is metrical in form but lacking in other poetic qualities, particularly in *imagination*. From what has already been said it follows that most great poetry will combine the elements present in both kinds, namely, metrical form and imagination. A simple diagram will make my meaning clear.



Circle A represents metrical literature.  
Circle B represents imaginative literature.  
The shaded portion represents POETRY.

If we accept any extension of the domain of Poetry, it is better made by the inclusion of Imaginative Prose



rather than of Prosaic Verse. The two passages which follow are both outside the sphere of Poetry indicated in our diagram ; but if one of the two is to be included there can be no doubt which should be chosen.

- (a) " Him from that posture did the Sexton rouse ;  
 Who entered, humming carelessly a tune,  
 Continuation haply of the notes  
 That had beguiled the work from which he came,  
 With spade and mattock o'er his shoulder hung ;  
 To be deposited, for future need,  
 In their appointed place. The pale Recluse  
 Withdrew ; and straight we followed,—to a spot  
 Where sun and shade were intermixed ; for there  
 A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms  
 From an adjoining pasture, overhung  
 Small space of that green churchyard with a light  
 And pleasant awning."

WORDSWORTH, *The Excursion*, Book V.

- (b) " The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He  
 maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth  
 me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : He  
 leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's  
 sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
 shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with  
 me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou  
 preparest a table before me in the presence of mine  
 enemies : Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup  
 runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow  
 me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house  
 of the Lord for ever."

23rd Psalm.

### *Poetry and Emotion.*

It is here that the cleavage between Poetry and Prose is widest. Prose can and does appeal to the emotions, but this appeal is only a means to an end. It is used to supplement an appeal to the reason which is the chief function of prose. When prose uses the " pathetic stop " too often we have the uneasy feeling that a breach of good form is being committed. In the

same way, although Poetry may and does appeal to the intelligence, it is carrying out its proper function when contact is made between the emotion which dominates the theme and the corresponding emotion in the heart of the reader. It was just such a contact that inspired General Wolfe's splendid tribute to Gray's *Elegy*. "Gentlemen," he said, "I would rather have written that than take Quebec."

Imaginative sympathy is the great solvent of frozen feelings. It sets flowing the "genial current of the soul." (Forces beset us in our struggle for existence which, unopposed, might well make Scrooges of us all. In reaffirming the supreme value of human charity, and by providing us with noble examples, poetry is able to stir our sluggish sympathies, so that not only do we realize afresh our common humanity, but we learn from our own experience that even the most iron-hearted Scrooge of us all is still within the pale.)

" He who feels contempt  
For any living thing, hath faculties  
That he hath never used : and Thought with him  
Is in its infancy."

This question of the "emotional appeal" has a deeper significance for the greater problems of life than is generally realized. When "feeling" is dormant, men of keen and busy intellect and spotless honesty are cheerfully prepared to sacrifice half a nation to political or religious theory. In *Saint Joan* Mr. Bernard Shaw sets before us a terrible picture of a man one side of whose nature was completely atrophied. Of all those who hungered for the Maid's punishment there was none so fierce and relentless as the English chaplain. When all is over, and the Earl of Warwick, who has refused to witness the burning, alone awaits the return of the others :



*The Chaplain staggers in from the courtyard like a demented creature, his face streaming with tears. . . .*

*Warwick (going to him and patting him on the shoulder).* What is it, Master John ? What is the matter ?

*The Chaplain (clutching at his hands).* My lord, my lord, for Christ's sake pray for my wretched, guilty soul.

*Warwick (soothing him).* Yes, yes ; of course I will. Calmly, gently——

*The Chaplain (blubbering miserably).* I am not a bad man, my lord.

*Warwick.* No, no ; not at all.

*The Chaplain.* I meant no harm. I did not know what it would be like.

*Warwick (hardening).* Oh ! You saw it then ?

*The Chaplain.* I did not know what I was doing. I am a hot-headed fool ; and I shall be damned for all eternity for it.

*Warwick.* Nonsense ! Very distressing, no doubt ; but it was not your doing.

*The Chaplain (lamentably).* I let them do it. If I had known, I would have torn her from their hands. You don't know, you haven't seen : it is so easy to talk when you don't know. You madden yourself with words : you damn yourself because it feels grand to throw on the flaming hell of your own temper. But when it is brought home to you ; when you see the thing you have done ; when it is blinding your eyes, stifling your nostrils, tearing your heart, then——then—— (*Falling on his knees*) O God, take away this sight from me ! O Christ, deliver me from this fire that is consuming me ! She cried to Thee in the midst of it, " Jesus ! Jesus ! Jesus ! " She is in Thy bosom ; and I am in hell for evermore.

A salutary lesson, this, for those " intense and narrow natures, who claim authority by virtue of their grasp of one half of the realities of our existence and their denial of the rest ! " Many of the excesses which have stained political and religious upheavals would have been avoided if the authors had realized that men are of more value than theories.

*Poetry and Imagination.*

Although Prose is not excluded from the field of Imagination, it makes no long sojourn there. Prose is the language of Reason, and though both Reason and Imagination are in search of truth, they follow different paths, and truth, when found, has not the same face for each. The scientist's conception of the rose is different from the poet's, yet both are true and equally serviceable for their respective purposes. The great poet is an explorer in realms of thought and feeling hitherto untrod. By some sublime power within himself he sees through flashes of imaginative insight "into the life of things," and is able to show their relation to the grand principles which control all thought and all being. He extends the bounds of his own experience and then of ours through the fusing alembic of our common emotional nature, until we too attain

" that blessed mood,  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened : . . .

until we also,

" with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,"

see into the life of things. " Our imaginations," says W. B. Yeats, " are but fragments of the universal imagination, and as we enlarge our imagination by imaginative sympathy, and transform, with the beauty and peace of art, the sorrows and joys of the world, we put off the limited mortal man more and more and put on the unlimited ' immortal man.' "

While the poet of imagination penetrates the remotest bounds of thought, the poet of *Fancy* explores the already charted realm of human experience, com-



binning and recombining in pleasing fashion ideas and images which in themselves might appear commonplace. This distinction will become clear if you will study carefully the two poems I shall now quote :

“ Where is the land of Luthany,  
Where is the tract of Elenore ?  
I am bound therefor.  
Pierce thy heart to find the key ;  
With thee take  
Only what none else would keep ;  
Learn to dream when thou dost wake,  
Learn to wake when thou dost sleep.

. . . . .  
When earth and heaven lay down their veil,  
And that apocalypse turns thee pale ;  
When thy seeing blindeth thee  
To what thy fellow-mortals see ;  
When their sight to thee is sightless ;  
Their living, death ; their light, most lightless ;  
Search no more—  
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the region Elenore.

. . . . .  
When to the new eyes of thee  
All things by immortal power,  
Near or far,  
Hiddenly  
To each other linkèd are,  
That thou canst not stir a flower  
Without troubling of a star ;

. . . . .  
O seek no more.  
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the region Elenore.”  
FRANCIS THOMPSON.

“ I never see the newsboys run  
Amid the whirling street,  
With swift untiring feet,  
To cry the latest venture done,  
But I expect one day to hear  
Them cry the crack of doom  
And risings from the tomb,  
With great Archangel Michael near ;

And see them running from the Fleet  
As messengers of God,  
With Heaven's tidings shod  
About their brave unwearied feet."

SHANE LESLIE.

The one poet tries to pierce the veil of the infinite by the force of imagination ; the other combines in a charming fashion by the gift of fancy two entirely unrelated things. There is not the slightest justification for supposing that newsboys any more than the press in general will be the first to announce " the crack of doom." The poet's sympathy with the brave newsboys is genuine enough ; but he would be the first to admit that in other respects the poem is fanciful.

### *Poetry and Science.*

It is the business of Science to deal with facts, to collect them, arrange them, to make generalizations from them, and so on. When it has done all it can do, there still remain in the world elements of mystery, of awe, of beauty, of spiritual experience which yield nothing to purely scientific investigation. Science cannot reveal the secret of motherly love, of a comrade's loyalty, of the poet's inspiration, of the rose's beauty. " The botanist," says Professor Hudson, " may dissect the ' flower in the crannied wall ' and, with its tiny members laid out before him, may discourse to us of its bracts and petals, its stamens and pistils. That everything he has to tell us will prove profoundly interesting and wonderful, I need not pause to insist. Yet, after all, the botanist's dissected flower is not our flower—is not the flower we actually know and love ; nor does his most elaborate analysis of it help us in the least to realize more keenly, what we often specially want to realize, the delight which we experience in its simple sweetness and beauty. For any vivid sense of such sweetness and beauty, for any



translation into words of the pleasure they give us, we have rather to turn to the poet who, by his imaginative handling of his subject, catches the meaning that it has for us, and expresses with absolute fidelity and stimulating power the feelings to which it gives birth in ourselves. For this reason Matthew Arnold is perfectly right in maintaining that 'the grand power of poetry is the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderful, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them.' " For this intimate sense of things we must turn to the poets, to Tennyson, when he tells us that

" So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint ;  
And made him like a man abroad at morn  
When first the liquid note beloved of men  
Comes flying over many a windy wave  
To Britain, and in April suddenly  
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,  
And he suspends his converse with a friend,  
Or it may be the labour of his hands,  
To think or say, ' There is the nightingale ' ; "

to Wordsworth :

" The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face ; "

to Burns and his mountain daisy :

" Wee modest crimson-tippèd flow'r,  
Thou's met me in an evil hour ;  
For I maun crush amang the stoure  
Thy slender stem :  
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,  
Thou bonnie gem.

. . . . .

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north  
 Upon thy early humble birth ;  
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
     Amid the storm,  
 Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth  
     Thy tender form."

As a final illustration we may compare the scientific and the poetic methods of representing an atmospheric disturbance. The one would give us barometric readings, the direction of winds, distribution of high and low pressure, and possibly a chart. Here is the other method :

" But swiftly in shuddering gloom the splendours fail,  
 As the harrying North-wind beareth  
 A cloud of skirmishing hail  
 The grieved woodland to smite :  
 In a hurricane through the trees he teareth,  
 Raking the boughs and the leaves rending,  
 And whistleth to the descending  
 Blows of his icy flail.  
 Cold and snow he mixeth in spite,  
 And whirlleth afar ; as away on his winnowing flight  
 He passeth, and all again for a while is bright."  
ROBERT BRIDGES.

Who can doubt which is the more intimate description ? ✓ Poetry is often made the scapegoat for loose thinking, but may there not be a greater danger in the arrogance of Science ? ✓

### *Poetry and the other Arts.*

A great friend of mine whose taste in decoration, dress, furniture, and kindred matters is faultless, assures me that a Beethoven recital (and she has heard many) always bores her. Another friend, who is stirred to the most exquisite pleasure by good music, confesses that poetry strikes no responsive chord in his nature. This is, of course, a common experience. I mention it



because we are apt to talk too glibly of what we call the artistic temperament, as though a person with such a temperament is susceptible to the appeal of any and all the arts. The truth of the matter is, of course, that the various arts, though possessing certain features in common, *inter se differunt*, as Cæsar would say, and their differences have led to corresponding differences of taste. Painting, Sculpture, Music, Architecture, and Poetry are all methods of expression. They are alike in this respect, that all artists try to express sincerely and beautifully some thought or feeling which has aroused their enthusiasm and challenged their skill.

As to the method of expression, the artist rarely has any choice : one must work in stone, another with sounds, another with pigments, yet another with words, each according to his own peculiar talent. Moreover, every artist, in a greater or less degree, is limited in his choice of subjects by the very nature of the materials he works in. A sculptor, for example, cannot reproduce a wide, well-wooded landscape with wisps of cloud seeking the mountain hollows. The painter, on the other hand, with his wider range of subjects, can work in only two dimensions ; his objects lack the solidity of statues and present only one side for our inspection. Artists naturally chafe under these restrictions, and sometimes invade one another's territory—rarely with success. Certain modern painters, in trying to suggest the solidity of sculpture in their pictures, have evolved the method of painting called Cubism. Purged of its eccentricities, it is doubtful whether Cubism can suggest more solidity than the great masters achieved by traditional methods, and extreme Cubism is already discredited. Other anarchists in the realm of painting find their spiritual home in the domain of music, and are making experiments in the “art of spiritual harmony.” Still others, faced with the difficulty of intractable material, go another

way to work. The late F. W. Robertson heard somewhere of a statue of a sleeping boy in some American town—a statue which is said to produce “a singular feeling of repose in all who gaze on it.” The story of the statue is at least “interesting and suggestive.”

“The sculptor gazed upon the skies on a summer’s morning, which had arisen as serene and calm as the blue eternity out of which it came; he went about haunted with the memory of that repose—it was necessary for him to express it. Had he been a poet, he would have thrown it into words; a painter, it would have found expression on the canvas; had he been an architect, he would have given us his feelings embodied as the builders of the Middle Ages embodied their aspirations, in a Gothic architecture; but being a sculptor, his pen was the chisel, his words stone, and so he threw his thoughts into the marble.”

Though unable to express the calm morning in stone, he could not resist such an appeal to his artistic sensibility, and so he translated the feeling the experience had aroused into the only language that owned his mastery.

A successful painter might not only lack musical skill, he might even be incapable of *enjoying*, still more of *appreciating* “the concord of sweet sounds.” Music appeals to an entirely different sense of beauty. Indeed, the exact nature of its appeal is something of a mystery. The same piece of music will often arouse in different hearers the most diverse, and even contradictory, emotions and ideas. If a new symphony were played for the first time to a dozen of the most reputable critics, and the critics were asked to write down individually the thoughts stimulated by the music, as likely as not there would be a dozen different interpretations, however much they agreed on questions of form and values. It is just as likely, and all the more remarkable, that a thirteenth interpretation would be supplied by the composer. So long as it



keeps within its own province Music is the least representative of the arts ; it is only when it becomes " pictorial " that with the help of descriptive notes we recognize what the composer is trying to represent ; and the fact that no great music is " pictorial " suggests that representation lies outside the legitimate province of Music.

Poetry is the most versatile of the arts—appealing to the ear like Music, and (indirectly) to the eye like Painting and Sculpture. It has this advantage over all the other arts, that it can represent a series of events which may be spread over a long period of time. Given a theme like the Fall of Man or the story of King Lear, artists like Milton and Shakespeare had opportunities which were denied to Velasquez and Michael Angelo, who, by the nature of their material, could represent only a single instant of time.

Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton is interesting on this point. " As compared with sculpture and painting," he says, " the great infirmity of poetry, as an ' imitation ' of Nature, is, of course, that the medium is always and of necessity words—even when no words could, in the dramatic situation, have been spoken. . . . This becomes manifest enough when we compare the Niobe group or the Laocoon group, or the great dramatic paintings of the modern world, with even the finest efforts of dramatic poetry, such as the speech of Andromache to Hector, or the speech of Priam to Achilles, nay such as even the cries of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*, or the wailings of Lear over the dead Cordelia. Even when writing the words uttered by Ædipus, as the terrible truth breaks in upon his soul, Sophocles must have felt that, in the holiest chambers of sorrow and in the highest agonies of suffering reigns that awful silence which not poetry, but painting sometimes, and sculpture always, can render. . . . It is in giving voice, not to emotion at its tensest, but to the variations of emotion, it is in expressing the countless shift-

ing movements of the soul from passion to passion, that poetry shows in spite of all her infirmities her superiority to the plastic arts."

Because all the arts superficially resemble one another, there has grown up a common art vocabulary into which each dips at will. We speak of "tone" in painting, of "light and shade" in music, of "embroidery" in poetry, of "loud" colours, of "building up" a theme in music, and architecture was called by Goethe "frozen poetry." When all is said, however, it should be remembered that analogies are often the most plausible rascals, and while it is tempting to look upon all the arts as sisters, it is as well to remember that in art, as in life, sisters are more often remarkable for their differences than for their resemblances.

### *Definitions of Poetry.*

The diversity of views expressed in the following definitions will illustrate the difficulty of arriving at an agreed theory as to the nature of Poetry. You will find in them, however, abundant material for discussion.

"Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be the expression of the imagination." SHELLEY.

"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity."

"Poetry is the image of man and nature."

WORDSWORTH.

"Poetry is the perpetual endeavour to express the spirit of the thing, and to pass the brute body and search the life and reason which causes it to exist."

EMERSON.

"Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth by calling imagination to the help of reason."

JOHNSON.



“ Poetry we will call Musical Thought ! ”

CARLYLE.

“ Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language.”

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

“ Poetry . . . a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

“ By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours.”

MACAULAY.

“ A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to the works of science, by proposing for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth ; and from all other species having this object in common with it, it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.”

COLERIDGE.

“ Poetry is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety and uniformity.”

LEIGH HUNT.

“ I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of beauty.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

## QUESTIONS

1. “ There is a certain stage of society in which people become conscious of their peculiarities and absurdities, affect to disguise what they are, and set up pretensions to what they are not.”

At what periods in English history has this been most



evident ? Show that poetry in this, as in other matters, is the mirror of society.

2. Discuss the statement that " A poet can become a great poet only if his message is urgent."

3. What truth is there in the statement that poetry is " continually struggling after the law or principle of music " ?

## CHAPTER II

### KINDS OF POETRY

#### *The Poet and his Theme.*

Speaking generally, the attitude of the poet to his work may be one of three kinds.

1. He may, as it were, stand outside his theme, acting the part of an onlooker who with detached mind describes the thoughts and experiences of the characters who people his world. This is known as the OBJECTIVE method, and the result is NARRATIVE or EPIC Poetry.

2. He may concern himself primarily with his own thoughts and experiences as affected by external circumstances. In other words, whatever form the poem may take, the poet himself is the real subject of his work. He may express himself in his own person or through some personality he assumes for the time being. This is called the SUBJECTIVE method, and the result is LYRIC Poetry.

3. The two methods may be combined as in the DRAMA, where action is represented *objectively*, while at the same time the characters give expression to their inner thoughts and feelings in the *subjective* manner.

These methods may be combined in other ways. Many of Wordsworth's narrative and descriptive poems are obviously vehicles for subjective emotions, while Browning said of his Dramatic Lyrics that they were, "though often lyrics in expression, always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine."

*Epic Poetry.*

The distinctive qualities of the true Epic, as exemplified by Homer's *Iliad*, and to a less degree by his *Odyssey*, may be summarized as follows :

1. It is a long narrative poem.
2. It is communal in character—*i.e.* it embodies the thoughts and feelings of the whole race rather than those of an individual. It follows, therefore, that it will be objective rather than subjective in character.
3. The theme is some action of unusual interest and importance, familiar to the people through tradition.
4. The characters are of the "heroic" type, and their actions are subject to the intervention of gods and controlled by destiny. Unity is achieved by concentration on one main character.
5. The style is marked by dignity and sublimity.
6. The same metre is used throughout.

It is generally believed that the material of the ancient epic was originally the "stock in trade" of minstrels and reciters, that it accumulated in various forms round the figure of some traditional hero until there arrived a poet who collected and sifted it and then moulded it by his art into a symmetrical whole. This type has been called the *Authentic Epic* or the *Epic of Growth*.

The following are examples : The *Iliad*, the *Song of Roland*, *Beowulf*, and the *Nibelungenlied*.

Another type of Epic, while dealing with similar material, reveals a definite purpose on the part of the poet to produce, in a consciously literary age, a poem in the epic manner. It may be called the *Literary Epic* or the *Epic of Art*.

In this class we should include : Virgil's *Æneid*, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and our own Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

In fundamentals the literary "epic of art" closely resembles the authentic "epic of growth." There is



the same use of supernatural and mythological matter, the same qualities of style, extending even to the orthodox epithets and figures of speech of the earlier type. But always there is in evidence the poet's concern with the accepted laws of a literary tradition. As Professor Hudson has said : " Where the epic of growth is fresh, spontaneous, racy, the epic of art is learned, antiquarian, bookish, imitative." In the primitive epic the matter was of first importance ; in the later type it is the method of presentation that matters. Perhaps this explains Mark Pattison's remark that a true appreciation of *Paradise Lost* is " the last reward of consummated scholarship." x.

The epic had its roots deep in antiquity, and has flourished but fitfully in modern times. The simple emotions and generous hero-worship of primitive races have given place to more complex feelings and a more questioning admiration for the leaders of men. Interest, too, tends to centre less round the deeds of men and more round their inner feelings, their character, and their spiritual bearings. Again, owing to the growth of other kinds of literature, the need which called the original epics into being no longer exists.

As students of your own literature you will naturally turn to *Paradise Lost* if you wish to see the epic poet at work. Other works in English which reveal something of the epic manner are the following : Southey's *The Curse of Kehama*, Landor's *Gebir*, Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*, and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Here is a short passage from Milton's great poem. If you give it the attention it merits it may lead you to ask for more. Satan is rallying his comrades after their disastrous fall from Heaven and orders his mighty standard to be upreared.

" That proud honour claim'd  
Azazel as his right, a Cherub tall :  
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurled

Th' Imperial Ensign, which full high advanced,  
 Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind  
 With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,  
 Seraphic arms and trophies : all the while  
 Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :  
 At which the universal host upsent  
 A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond  
 Frighted the reign of *Chaos* and old Night.  
 All in a moment through the gloom were seen  
 Ten thousand banners rise into the air  
 With orient colours waving : with them rose  
 A forest huge of spears : and thronging helms  
 Appeared, and serried shields in thick array  
 Of depth immeasurable : Anon they move  
 In perfect Phalanx to the Dorian mood  
 Of Flutes and soft recorders ; such as rais'd  
 To height of noblest temper heroes old  
 Arming to battle, and instead of rage  
 Deliberate valour breathed, firm and unmov'd  
 With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,  
 Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage  
 With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and chase  
 Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain  
 From mortal or immortal minds. . . ."

(Of Satan.)

" He above the rest  
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent  
 Stood like a tower ; his form had not yet lost  
 All her original brightness, nor appear'd  
 Less than Archangel ruined, and th' excess  
 Of glory obscured : As when the sun new risen  
 Looks through the horizontal misty air  
 Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon  
 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds  
 On half the nations, and with fear of change  
 Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone  
 Above them all the Archangel : but his face  
 Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care  
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride  
 Waiting revenge. Cruel his eye, but cast  
 Signs of remorse and passion, to behold



The fellows of his crime, the followers rather  
 (Far other once beheld in bliss), condemned  
 For ever now to have their lot in pain—  
 Millions of Spirits for his fault amerced  
 Of Heaven, and from eternal splendours flung  
 For his revolt—yet faithful how they stood,  
 Their glory withered ; as, when Heaven's fire  
 Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
 With singèd top their stately growth, though bare,  
 Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepared  
 To speak ; whereat their doubled ranks they bend  
 From wing to wing, and half enclose him round  
 With all his peers : attention held them mute.  
 Thrice he essayed, and thrice, in spite of scorn,  
 Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth : at last  
 Words interwove with sighs found out their way."

From Homer onwards writers of Epic Poetry have taken peculiar delight in the Simile. Sometimes this figure is so elaborately treated as to acquire a poetic value of its own. Homer thus describes the Grecian host preparing for battle :

" As on some mountain, through the lofty grove,  
 The crackling flames ascend and blaze above,  
 The fires, expanding as the winds arise,  
 Shoot their long beams, and kindle half the skies,  
 So from the polished arms, and brazen shields,  
 A gleamy splendour flashed along the fields.  
 Not less their number than the embodied cranes,  
 Or milk-white swans in Asius' watery plains,  
 That, o'er the windings of Cäyster's springs,  
 Stretch their long necks, and clasp their rustling  
     wings ;  
 Now tower aloft, and course in airy rounds ;  
 Now light with noise ; with noise the field resounds.  
 Thus numerous and confused, extending wide,  
 The legions crown Scamander's flowery side ;  
 With rushing troops the plains are covered o'er,  
 And thundering footsteps shake the sounding shore ;  
 Along the river's level meads they stand,  
 Thick as in spring the flowers adorn the land,  
 Or leaves the trees ; or thick as insects play,

The wandering nation of a summer's day,  
 That, drawn by milky steams, at evening hours,  
 In gathered swarms surround the rural bowers ;  
 From pail to pail with busy murmur run  
 The gilded legions, glittering in the sun.  
 So thronged, so close, the Grecian squadrons stood  
 In radiant arms, and thirst for Trojan blood."

POPE'S *translation*.

After Homer, Virgil :

" Thus he speaks, and ere the words are done he  
 soothes the swollen seas, chases away the gathered  
 clouds, and restores the sunlight. Cymothoe and Triton  
 together push the ships strongly off the sharp reef ; him-  
 self he eases them with his trident, channels the vast  
 quicksands, and assuages the sea, gliding on light wheels  
 along the water. Even as when oft in a throng of people  
 strife hath risen, and the base multitude rage in their  
 minds, and now brands and stones are flying ; madness  
 lends arms ; then if perchance they catch sight of one  
 reverend for goodness and service, they are silent and  
 stand by with attentive ear ; he with speech sways their  
 temper and soothes their breasts ; even so hath fallen all  
 the thunder of ocean, when riding forward beneath a  
 cloudless sky the lord of the sea wheels his coursers and  
 lets his gliding chariot fly with loosened rein."

MACKAIL'S *translation*.

Milton follows with :

" Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate,  
 With head uplift above the wave, and eyes  
 That sparkling blazed ; his other parts besides  
 Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
 Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
 Titanian or Earth-born, that warred on Jove,  
 Briareos or Typhon, whom the den  
 By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
 Leviathan, which God of all His works  
 Created hugest that swim the ocean stream.  
 Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
 The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,



Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
 With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind,  
 Moors by his side under the lee, while night  
 Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays.  
 So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,  
 Chained on the burning lake."

One more example, this time from Tennyson :

" And while he waited in the castle court,  
 The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang  
 Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,  
 Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,  
 Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,  
 Moves him to think what kind of bird it is  
 That sings so delicately clear, and make  
 Conjecture of the plumage and the form ;  
 So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint,  
 And made him like a man abroad at morn  
 When first the liquid note beloved of men  
 Comes flying over many a windy wave  
 To Britain, and in April suddenly  
 Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,  
 And he suspends his converse with a friend,  
 Or it may be the labour of his hands,  
 To think or say, ' There is the nightingale ' ;  
 So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,  
 ' Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me.' "

### *The Mock Epic.*

In the Mock Epic the form and conventions of the epic proper are used to clothe a trivial theme. The resulting incongruity is applied to the purposes of humour or ridicule. Examples of this form are : Butler's *Hudibras* and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

In the latter poem we are told how a young nobleman surreptitiously cut off a lock of a young lady's hair while she was drinking a cup of coffee. From this comparatively trifling offence there sprang up a deadly feud between the two families. A few short passages



will suffice to illustrate the mock-heroic style of the poem. Belinda had

“ Two locks, which graceful hung behind  
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck  
With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck ;  
The adventurous baron the bright locks admired,  
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.”

The crime was committed at Hampton Court. At the opportune moment a mischievous damsel provides the villain with a pair of scissors and

“ The meeting points the sacred hair dissever  
From the fair head for ever and for ever ! ”

Belinda's wrath is terrible :

“ Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,  
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies ;  
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,  
When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last,  
Or when rich china vessels fallen from high,  
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie.”

Their respective families join in the battle over the stolen lock. In the end the lock cannot be found : it has soared aloft into the heavens :

“ A sudden star it shot through liquid air,  
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.  
Then cease, bright nymph, to mourn thy ravished  
hair,  
Which adds new glories to the shining sphere :  
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast  
Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.  
For after all the murders of your eye,  
When after millions slain yourself shall die,  
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,  
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust :  
This lock the muse shall consecrate to fame,  
And midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.”

*The Ballad.*

Akin to the Epic in origin and certain of its characteristics are the genuine ballads. There was the same communal origin ; they spoke for the mass of the people among whom they were evolved. Love, hatred, pity, war, hunting, the supernatural—these were the common themes. Occasionally the stories have astonishing dramatic power. They are rapid in movement, unsophisticated in feeling, and have a crudeness of metre which has a charm all its own. As Professor Hudson has remarked : “ They are specially deserving of study at a time like our own when, in literature as in music, the current flows so strong in the direction of ever-increasing complexity that our tastes are becoming sophisticated and we are in danger of losing all healthy appreciation of what is simple, broad, and elemental.”

The following characteristics of the early authentic ballad should be noted :

1. It is communal in origin, being the product of a people and not the individual work of a poet.
2. It is impersonal—*i.e.* objective in treatment.
3. It usually relates a tale. (For subjects, see above.)
4. Originally, as its name suggests, it was associated with some form of dancing. Later it was sung, and then recited.
5. The theme opens abruptly. There is no introductory matter.
6. The metrical structure is crude but pleasing.
7. Conventional epithets are employed.
8. Repetition and the refrain are generally present.
9. The favourite stanza is one of four lines, only the second and fourth lines rhyming.

Examples : *Fair Helen of Kirconnell*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Robin Hood and Alan-a-Dale*, *Chevy-Chace*, *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury*, and *The Wife of Usher's Well*, which we reproduce here.

## The Wife of Usher's Well

There lived a wife at Usher's Well,  
And a wealthy wife was she :  
She had three stout and stalwart sons,  
And sent them o'er the sea.

They had not been a week from her,  
A week but barely ane,  
When word came to the carline wife  
That her three sons were gane.

They had not been a week from her,  
A week but barely three,  
When word came to the carline wife  
That her sons she'd never see.

" I wish the wind may never cease,  
Nor fishes in the flood,  
Till my three sons come hame to me  
In earthly flesh and blood ! "

It fell about the Martinmas,  
When nights are lang and mirk,  
The carline wife's three sons came hame,  
And their hats were of the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,  
Nor yet in ony sheugh,  
But at the gates o' paradise  
That birk grew fair eneugh.

" Blow up the fire, my maidens !  
Bring water from the well !  
For all my house shall feast this night,  
Since my three sons are well ! "

And she has made to them a bed,  
She's made it large and wide ;  
And she's ta'en her mantle her about ;  
Sat down at the bedside.

*carline*, old woman.  
*syke*, marsh.

*birk*, birch.  
*sheugh*, trench.



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

Then up and crew the red, red cock,  
 And up and crew the grey ;  
 The eldest to the youngest said,  
 “ ’Tis time we were away ! ”

The cock he hadna craw’d but ance,  
 And clapp’d his wings at a’,  
 When the youngest to the eldest said,  
 “ Brother, we must awa’.”

“ The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,  
 The channerin’ worm doth chide ;  
 Gin we be miss’d out o’ our place,  
 A sair pain we must bide.”—

“ Lie still, lie still but a little wee while,  
 Lie still but if we may ;  
 Gin my mother should miss us when she wakes,  
 She’ll go mad ere it be day.”—

“ Fare ye well, my mother dear !  
 Farewell to barn and byre !  
 And fare ye well, the bonny lass,  
 That kindles my mother’s fire ! ”

## Fair Helen

I wish I were where Helen lies ;  
 Night and day on me she cries ;  
 O that I were where Helen lies  
 On fair Kirconnell lea !

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,  
 And curst the hand that fired the shot,  
 When in my arms burd Helen dropt,  
 And died to succour me !

O think na but my heart was sair  
When my Love dropt down and spak' nae mair !  
I laid her down wi' mickle care  
On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water-side,  
None but my foe to be my guide,  
None but my foe to be my guide,  
On fair Kirconnell lea ;

I lighted down my sword to draw,  
I hacked him in pieces sma',  
I hacked him in pieces sma',  
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare !  
I'll make a garland of thy hair  
Shall bind my heart for ever mair  
Until the day I die.

O that I were where Helen lies !  
Night and day on me she cries ;  
Out of my bed she bids me rise,  
Says, " Haste and come to me ! "

O Helen fair ! O Helen chaste !  
If I were with thee, I were blest,  
Where thou lies low and takes thy rest  
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,  
A winding-sheet drawn ower my een,  
And I in Helen's arms lying,  
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies ;  
Night and day on me she cries ;  
And I am weary of the skies,  
Since my Love died for me.

*The Literary Ballad.*

We saw that the primitive epic had a literary descendant in the "epic of art." So also the primitive ballad has its modern successors. These are of two kinds. There are some, like the ballads of Sir Walter Scott, which keep close to the traditional form and method. In other words, they are conscious imitations, beautiful as they often are. Other poets like Tennyson and Browning have evolved a new type of ballad which owes much to the inspiration of the early times but little to conscious imitation.

Of the former class, perhaps Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is the finest example. Here is a shorter one by Allan Cunningham :

### The Young Maxwell

"Where gang ye, thou silly auld carle?  
And what do ye carry there?"

"I'm gaun to the hill, thou sodger man,  
To shift my sheep their lair."

Ae stride or twa took the silly auld carle,  
An' a gude lang stride took he;

"I trow thou be a feck auld carle,  
Will ye show the way to me?"

An' he has gane wi' the silly auld carle,  
Adown by the greenwood side,

"Light down and gang, thou sodger man,  
For here ye canna ride."

He drew the reins o' his bonny grey steed,  
An' lightly down he sprang:

Of the comeliest scarlet was his weir coat,  
Whare the gowden tassels hang.

He has thrown off his plaid, the silly auld carle,  
An' his bonnet frae 'boon his bree;

And wha was it but the young Maxwell  
An' his good brown sword drew he.



' Thou killed my father, thou vile Southron !  
 An' ye killed my brethren three !  
 Whilk brake the heart o' my ae sister  
 I loved as the light o' my ee !

" Draw out yer sword, thou vile Southron !  
 Red-wat wi' blude o' my kin ;  
 That sword it crapped the bonniest flower  
 E'er lifted its head to the sun.

" There's ae sad stroke for my dear auld father !  
 There's twa for my brothers three !  
 An' there's ane to thy heart for my ae sister,  
 Wham I loved as the light o' my ee !

As examples of the second type read Browning's *How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, and Tennyson's *The Defence of Lucknow*.

### *The Mock Ballad.*

The Mock Ballad serves the same purpose as the Mock Epic. Cowper's *John Gilpin* is a pleasant example of the humorous ballad. The best example I know of the burlesque kind is Calverley's *Striking*, beginning :

" It was a railway passenger,  
 And he leapt out jauntilie.  
 ' Now up and bear, thou stout porter,  
 My two chattels for me.' "

### \* *Lyric Poetry.*

The term " Lyric " is often applied to all classes of poetry which are neither narrative nor dramatic. We propose for the moment to limit its application to poetry which is subjective in character. The earliest lyric required the accompaniment of the harp, and throughout its history the Lyric has retained in varying degrees the qualities of song. Certainly, many beautiful lyrics cannot be set to music, but they have

a compensating verbal melody in which the ear rejoices. Some lyrics ask to be sung ; not so the following lines, but who would deny that they were musical ?

“ Happy happy time, when the white star hovers  
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,  
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,  
Threading it with colour, like yewberries the yew.  
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave east deepens  
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.  
Maiden still the morn is, and strange she is, and secret ;  
Strange her eyes ; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.”

The chief characteristic of the Lyric, however, is its emotional quality—its intensity. It is the poetic cry from the heart—of joy, sorrow, fervour, exultation. It follows that since powerful feelings are of brief duration, the lyric, as an artistic expression of emotion, is short. It has been called “the quintessence of momentary mood garnered into words.” It has a more absolute unity than any other form of poetry, being concerned with a single emotion. Now emotional experience varies greatly in kind, and though its duration is short it is subject to sudden or impulsive changes in intensity. This accounts for the multiplicity of lyric forms, for art demands that the form shall conform with the emotion. It has already been explained that the lyric poet is distinguished from the epic poet in being primarily concerned with himself, his own feelings and spiritual bearings. This does not imply that we cannot share in his emotion. On the contrary, it is just when the poet, in giving expression to his deepest feelings, strikes a chord which sets all our hearts vibrating that he attains lyrical perfection : great poetry, as we have seen, must make a universal appeal. There is another kind of perfection in the best lyrics which defies analysis. It owes something to a diction which startles and waylays, and more,



perhaps, to a magical and haunting cadence. Shakespeare has it :

“ Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.”

Keats also :

“ Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

Walter De La Mare has captured it :

“ Here lies a most beautiful lady,  
Light of step and heart was she ;  
I think she was the most beautiful lady  
That ever was in the West Country.  
But beauty vanishes ; beauty passes ;  
However rare—rare it be ;  
And when I crumble, who will remember  
This lady of the West Country ? ”

The brevity of the lyric has led poets to expend upon it all the resources of their art, until it has become “ a many-splendoured thing.” In spite of this the best lyrics have a surprising spontaneity. Of all forms of poetry, with the exception of the ballad, they smell least of the lamp. Every word, every phrase seems inevitable. No one realizes better than the successful writer of lyrics that one of the secrets of art lies in concealing it.

It will be useful, now, to summarize the chief qualities of the Lyric.

1. It is musical, metrically or verbally, or both.
2. It is subjective in character.
3. It is the expression of a single emotion, and so achieves unity.



4. It is spontaneous, unpremeditated, or rather appears so.

5. Compared with other types of poetry it is short.

6. It enjoys an endless variety of form.

7. It is embellished with consummate (though concealed) art.

8. There is often a wistful or haunting loveliness which eludes all tests.

In sheer beauty and variety of music English lyric poetry is supreme. We have room for a few—only too few—of “the loveliest and the best.”

### 1. The Greenwood Tree

Under the greenwood tree  
 Who loves to lie with me,  
 And turn his merry note  
 Unto the sweet bird's throat—  
 Come hither, come hither, come hither !  
     Here shall he see  
     No enemy  
 But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun  
 And loves to sit i' the sun,  
 Seeking the food he eats  
 And pleased with what he gets—  
 Come hither, come hither, come hither !  
     Here shall he see  
     No enemy  
 But winter and rough weather.

SHAKESPEARE.

### 2. The True Beauty

He that loves a rosy cheek  
 Or a coral lip admires,  
 Or from star-like eyes doth seek  
     Fuel to maintain his fires ;  
 As old Time makes these decay,  
 So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,  
 Gentle thoughts and calm desires,  
 Hearts with equal love combined,  
 Kindle never-dying fires :—  
 Where these are not, I despise  
 Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes.

CAREW.

## 3. Melancholy

Hence all you vain delights,  
 As short as are the nights  
 Wherein you spend your folly :  
 There's nought in this life sweet,  
 If man were wise to see't,  
 But only melancholy,  
 O sweetest melancholy !  
 Welcome, folded arms, and fixèd eyes,  
 A sigh that piercing mortifies,  
 A look that's fasten'd to the ground,  
 A tongue chain'd up without a sound !  
 Fountain heads and pathless groves,  
 Places which pale passion loves !  
 Moonlight walks, when all the fowls  
 Are warmly housed, save bats and owls !  
 A midnight bell, a parting groan—  
 These are the sounds we feed upon ;  
 Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley ;  
 Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

J. FLETCHER.

1746

4. Ode written in MDCCXLVI

How sleep the Brave who sink to rest  
 By all their Country's wishes blest !  
 When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
 Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,  
 She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
 Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung ;  
 By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;

## THE STUDY OF POETRY

There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,  
 To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;  
 And Freedom shall awhile repair  
 To dwell, a weeping hermit, there.

W. COLLINS.

## 5. John Anderson

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
 When we were first acquaint  
 Your locks were like the raven,  
 Your bonnie brow was brent ;  
 But now your brow is beld, John,  
 Your locks are like the snow ;  
 But blessings on your frosty pow,  
 John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
 We clamb the hill thegither,  
 And mony a canty day, John,  
 We've had wi' ane anither :  
 Now we maun totter down, John,  
 But hand in hand we'll go,  
 And sleep thegither at the foot,  
 John Anderson, my jo.

ROBERT BURNS.

## 6. " She is not Fair "

She is not fair to outward view  
 As many maidens be ;  
 Her loveliness I never knew  
 Until she smiled on me.  
 O then I saw her eye was bright,  
 A well of love, a spring of light.  
 But now her looks are coy and cold,  
 To mine they ne'er reply,  
 And yet I cease not to behold  
 The love-light in her eye :  
 Her very frowns are fairer far  
 Than smiles of other maidens are.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.



## 7. The Mariner's Song

A wet sheet and a flowing sea,  
 A wind that follows fast  
 And fills the white and rustling sail  
 And bends the gallant mast ;  
 And bends the gallant mast, my boys,  
 While like the eagle free  
 Away the good ship flies, and leaves  
 Old England on the lee.

O for a soft and gentle wind !  
 I heard a fair one cry :  
 But give to me the snoring breeze  
 And white waves heaving high ;  
 And white waves heaving high, my lads,  
 The good ship tight and free—  
 The world of waters is our home,  
 And merry men are we.

There's tempest in yon hornèd moon,  
 And lightning in yon cloud ;  
 But hark the music, mariners !  
 The wind is piping loud ;  
 The wind is piping loud, my boys,  
 The lightning flashes free—  
 While the hollow oak our palace is,  
 Our heritage, the sea.

A. CUNNINGHAM.

## 8. Rose Aylmer

Ah, what avails the sceptred race !  
 Ah, what the form divine !  
 What every virtue, every grace !  
 Rose Aylmer, all were thine.  
 Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes  
 May weep, but never see,  
 A night of memories and of sighs  
 I consecrate to thee.

W. S. LANDOR.

## 9. " Out of the Night "

Out of the night that covers me,  
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
 I thank whatever gods may be  
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
 I have not winced or cried aloud.  
 Under the bludgeonings of chance  
 My head is bloody but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
 Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
 And yet the menace of the years  
 Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
 How charged with punishments the scroll,  
 I am the master of my fate :  
 I am the captain of my soul.

W. E. HENLEY.

## 10. To a Snowflake

What heart would have thought you ?—  
 Past our devisal  
 (O filigree petal !)  
 Fashioned so purely,  
 Fragilely, surely,  
 From what Paradisal  
 Imagineless metal,  
 Too costly for cost ?  
 Who hammered you, wrought you,  
 From argentine vapour ?—  
 " God was my shaper  
 Passing surmisal,  
 He hammered, He wrought me,  
 From curled silver vapour,  
 To lust of His mind :—  
 Thou couldst not have thought me !

So purely, so palely,  
 Tinily, surely,  
 Mightily, frailly,  
 Insculped and embossed,  
 With His hammer of wind,  
 And His graver of frost."

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

## II. When you are Old

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,  
 And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
 And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
 Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep ;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
 And loved your beauty with love false or true  
 But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
 And loved the sorrows in your changing face.

And bending down beside the glowing bars  
 Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled  
 And paced upon the mountains overhead,  
 And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

W. B. YEATS.

### *The Sonnet.*

We have now to consider several classes of poetry partaking in a greater or less degree of the nature of the Lyric, but differing from it in important particulars.

The Sonnet is a somewhat artificial form, of Provençal origin. Its name suggests that it was originally a song, but by the time its vogue reached England, via Italy, it had already lost its original character. Its earliest exponents in this country were Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare. As most of our leading poets have practised the art, we possess many beautiful examples. Owing to its intricate structure the Sonnet, unlike the true lyric, is frequently lacking in spontaneity and freshness, leaning rather towards



reserve and reflection. Nevertheless its technical difficulties have served as a challenge, and the best examples are marked by consummate, if formal, art.

There are two main types: one the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet (so called in honour of one of its most brilliant exponents), the other English or Shakespearean. In both types the normal measure is iambic pentameter running to fourteen lines. The most obvious difference is in the scheme of rhymes. The Italian sonnet is divided into two parts—an octave of eight lines and a sestet of six. The octave rhymes as follows:

*abbaabba.*

The rhymes of the sestet vary, the commonest schemes being:

*cdecde* and *cdcdcd.*

This division into octave and sestet is often found to correspond with a variation in the treatment of the single theme or thought which dominates the poem and gives it unity. This will be clear if you will study the arrangement of Keats's *The Grasshopper and the Cricket*. The sonnet will also serve as an example of the Italian type.

“ The poetry of earth is never dead :  
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead :  
That is the Grasshopper's ; he takes the lead  
In summer luxury ; he has never done  
With his delights, for, when tired out with fun,  
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never :  
On a lone winter evening, when the frost  
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills  
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,  
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost  
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.”

The English or Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a rhyming couplet, the following being the scheme of rhymes most favoured :

*abab cdcd efef gg.*

The final couplet often has the force of an epigram. Here is a sonnet of Shakespeare's ; it is called *A Consolation* :

✓ "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate ;

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possest,  
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least ;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on Thee—and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising,  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate ;

For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

✓ Owing to its obvious rhyming scheme the English form no doubt makes a more ready appeal, but most sonneteers since Shakespeare have been attracted to the more intricate art form of the earlier mode. So much of our poetry is "romantic" in its impatience of rigid laws that the compulsory restraint imposed by the Italian type makes its own appeal to the artistic love of form and finish. Even Wordsworth—no great lover of "art for art's sake"—when tired of unchartered freedom often sought the narrow cell of the sonnet.

"In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground."



From what I have said you will gather (quite rightly) that the sonnet is “not everybody’s poetry.” On the other hand, I want you to realize that we have a noble array of sonnets which have wondrously enriched our great literature. With this I am sure you will come to agree if you will take the trouble to discover the best. Some of the very finest you will find in the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and Wordsworth.

### Care-charmer Sleep

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,  
 Brother to Death in silent darkness born,  
 Relieve my languish, and restore the light ;  
 With dark forgetting of my care return.

And let the day be time enough to mourn  
 The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth :  
 Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,  
 Without the torment of the night’s untruth.

Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,  
 To model forth the passions of the morrow ;  
 Never let rising Sun approve you liars  
 To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow :

Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,  
 And never wake to feel the day’s disdain.

S. DANIEL, 1562–1619.

### Love’s Farewell

Since there’s no help, come let us kiss and part,—  
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me ;  
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,  
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free ;

Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,  
 And when we meet at any time again  
 Be it not seen in either of our brows  
 That we one jot of former love retain.



Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,  
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,  
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
And innocence is closing up his eyes,

—Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,  
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover !

M. DRAYTON, 1563-1631.

✓ When the Assault was intended to the City  
Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,  
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,  
If deed of honour did thee ever please,  
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.

He can requite thee ; for he knows the charms  
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,  
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,  
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.

Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower :  
The great Æmathan conqueror bid spare  
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower

Went to the ground ; and the repeated air  
Of sad Electra's poet had the power  
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

JOHN MILTON, 1608-74.

### Upon Westminster Bridge

Earth has not anything to show more fair :  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty :  
This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning : silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill ;  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !

The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
 Dear God, the very houses seem asleep ;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still !  
 W. WORDSWORTH, 1770-1850.

### The Human Seasons

Four seasons fill the measure of the year ;  
 There are four seasons in the mind of man :  
 He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear  
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span :

He has his Summer, when luxuriously  
 Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves  
 To ruminate, and by such dreaming high  
 Is nearest unto heaven : quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings  
 He furleth close ; contented so to look  
 On mists in idleness—to let fair things  
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook :

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,  
 Or else he would forgo his mortal nature.  
 J. KEATS, 1795-1821.

### Shakespeare

Others abide our question—Thou art free !  
 We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,  
 Out-topping knowledge ! So some sovran hill  
 Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,  
 Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,



Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,  
 Spares but the border, often, of his base  
 To the foil'd searching of mortality ;  
 And thou, whose head did stars and sunbeams know,  
 Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,  
 Didst walk on earth unguess'd at.—Better so !

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
 All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
 Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

*my*.

M. ARNOLD, 1822-88.

### *The Ode.*

The term " Ode " has been used to describe so many different kinds of poetry that it is very difficult to define. According to the New English Dictionary it is " a rimed (rarely unrimed) lyric, often in the form of an address ; generally dignified or exalted in subject, feeling, and style." It is usually more elaborate in workmanship than the pure lyric, and also longer, since it depends partly for its appeal on the orderly development of its theme. Originally it was intended to be chanted by a chorus on some notable public occasion. A good modern example which suggests the presence of an audience is Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*. In this, as in many other odes, the theme proceeds to a climax in waves of emotional exaltation and despair, expressed in stanzas of varying form and inconstant movement. Sometimes a strictly classic model is preferred. The Greek Pindar and the Roman Horace were the favourite exemplars. Gray's *Ode on the Progress of Poesy* is the best example we have of the regular Pindaric type. You should note the grouping of the stanzas : the strophe and the antistrophe (which are of the same form and length), and the epode. This grouping may be repeated again and again. The unit of Gray's *Ode* is as follows :

Strophe, twelve lines.

Antistrophe, twelve lines.

Epode, seventeen lines.



“Awake, Æolian lyre, awake,  
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.  
From Helicon’s harmonious springs

A thousand rills their mazy progress take.  
The laughing flowers that round them blow  
Drink life and fragrance as they flow.  
Now the rich stream of music winds along  
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,  
Thro’ verdant vales, and Ceres’ golden reign ;  
Now rolling down the steep amain,  
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour :  
The rocks and nodding groves re-bellow to the roar.

Oh ! Sovereign of the willing soul,  
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,  
Enchanting shell ! the sullen Cares

And frantic Passions hear thy soft controul.  
On Thracia’s hills the Lord of War  
Has curb’d the fury of his car  
And dropt his thirsty lance at thy command.  
Perching on the sceptred hand  
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feather’d king  
With ruffled plumes, and flagging wing :  
Quench’d in dark clouds of slumber lie  
The terror of his beak, and lightnings of his eye.

Thee the voice, the dance, obey,  
Temper’d to thy warbled lay.

O’er Idalia’s velvet-green

The rosy-crowned Loves are seen

On Cytherea’s day ;

With antic Sport, and blue-eyed Pleasures,

Frisking light in frolic measures ;

Now pursuing, now retreating,

Now in circling troops they meet :

To brisk notes in cadence beating

Glance their many-twinkling feet.

Slow melting strains their Queen’s approach declare :

Where’er she turns, the Graces homage pay :

With arms sublime, that float upon the air,

In gliding state she wins her easy way :

O’er her warm cheek and rising bosom move

The bloom of young Desire and purple light of Love.”

This unit occurs thrice in the complete poem.

I have said that this is the best poem we have in this form. As a matter of fact most attempts in the strict Pindaric mode seem unconvincing. The form is there, but the ancient spirit breathes with difficulty in an alien air. The regularity of form in which such odes are moulded is often on too vast a scale for the ear to appreciate it without the accompaniment of music and dancing which were associated with the original ode. "The reason is obvious," says Professor Bronson. "The singers moved to one side during the strophe, retracing their steps during the antistrophe (which was for that reason metrically identical with the strophe), and standing still during the epode. The ear was thus helped by the eye, and the divisions of the ode were distinct and significant."

Attempts in the Horatian manner have been more successful. Here are a few noble lines from Marvell on the fate of the unfortunate monarch, Charles I. A net has been woven round the king at Carisbrook :

✓ That thence the Royal actor borne  
The tragic scaffold might adorn :  
While round the armèd bands  
Did clap their bloody hands.

He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene,  
But with his keener eye  
The axe's edge did try ;

Nor call'd the Gods, with vulgar spite,  
To vindicate his helpless right ;  
But bow'd his comely head  
Down, as upon a bed.

The *Ode to Evening*, by W. Collins, is even nearer the original in form in that it dispenses with rhyme. In view of certain resemblances it bears to the opening lines of Gray's *Elegy* it is well to remember that Gray's poem was composed *after* that of Collins.



## Ode to Evening

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song  
May hope, O pensive Eve, to soothe thine ear  
Like thy own solemn springs,  
Thy springs, and dying gales ;

O Nymph reserved,—while now the bright-haired sun  
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,  
With brede etherial wove,  
O'erhang his wavy bed ;

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat  
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,  
Or where the beetle winds  
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises midst the twilight path,  
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum,—  
Now teach me, maid composed,  
To breathe some soften'd strain

Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,  
May not unseemly with its stillness suit ;  
As, musing slow, I hail  
Thy genial loved return.

For when thy folding-star arising shows  
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp  
The fragrant Hours, and Elves  
Who slept in buds the day,

And many a Nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge  
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,  
The pensive Pleasures sweet,  
Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene ;  
Or find some ruin midst its dreary dells,  
Whose walls more awful nod  
By thy religious gleams.



Or, if chill blustering winds or driving rain  
 Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut  
 That from the mountain's side,  
 Views wilds, and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires ;  
 And hears their simple bell ; and marks o'er all  
 Thy dewy fingers draw  
 The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,  
 And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve !  
 While Summer loves to sport  
 Beneath thy lingering light ;

While fallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves ;  
 Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,  
 Affrights thy shrinking train  
 And rudely rends thy robes ;

So long, regardless of thy quiet rule,  
 Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace,  
 Thy gentlest influence own,  
 And love thy favourite name !

Of the irregular type of ode we have many beautiful examples, and, for the most part, they are far removed in spirit as in form from the classic models. Nothing could be less like a chorus than Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, in which we hear a personal and subjective note. The interplay of emotion and reflection may be seen in Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, and in that far finer composition, the *Immortality* ode of William Wordsworth, of which the several metres are "inseparable from what each is employed to express." One need only glance at the first three stanzas to realize this.

" There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
 The earth, and every common sight  
 To me did seem  
 Apparell'd in celestial light,  
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore ;—  
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
     By night or day,  
 The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

    The rainbow comes and goes,  
     And lovely is the rose ;  
     The moon doth with delight  
 Look round her when the heavens are bare ;  
     Waters on a starry night  
     Are beautiful and fair ;  
 The sunshine is a glorious birth ;  
 But yet I know, where'er I go,  
 That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
 And while the young lambs bound  
     As to the tabor's sound,  
 To me alone there came a thought of grief :  
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
     And I again am strong.

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ;  
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong :  
 I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,  
 The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
     And all the earth is gay ;

    Land and sea  
 Give themselves up to jollity,  
     And with the heart of May  
 Doth every beast keep holiday ;—  
     Thou child of joy !

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy  
 Shepherd-boy."

On the whole the most successful odes in our language are those whose form is of this elastic nature in which alternating notes of lyrical passion and sober reflection find a more accommodating instrument. From what I have said it should be clear that the ode differs from the true lyric in this, that while the emotional fervour of the lyric is momentary that of the ode is prolonged and inconstant, rising and falling as the heart and mind in turn prevail.



The chief characteristics of the ode are now summarized :

1. It is longer than the true lyric.
2. The emotion is of a kind that permits of development.
3. The language is dignified in style and exalted in tone.
4. The structure may be regular or irregular, and is often elaborate.
5. The ode may suggest its choral origin, or it may be purely personal and subjective.

### *The Elegy.*

Similar in some respects to the Ode is the Elegy. Originally it was a poem of lamentation set to music. The causes of lamentation were various—war, political feuds, the manners and morals of the time, death—in fact, any theme that could be fittingly expressed in the “elegiac” measure which Longfellow describes and illustrates as follows :

“ Peradventure of old some bard in Ionian Islands,  
Walking alone by the sea, hearing the wash of the  
    waves,  
Learn'd the secret from them of the beautiful verse  
    elegiac,  
Breathing into his song motions and sounds of the sea.”

If you read these lines aloud you will understand why this measure came to be married to themes of a haunting sadness.

The Elegy is, as a rule, less spontaneous than the true lyric, and, like the Ode, is often elaborate in style. Sometimes Death is the inspiration and sole theme ; at other times it is merely the common starting-point from which poets have launched various themes—speculations on the nature of death and the hereafter, tributes to friends, the poet's own mood, even literary



criticism. In what is perhaps the best known of English elegies, Gray's *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, the note of personal lament is but faintly sounded. The Renaissance brought into favour a conventional type, the Pastoral Elegy, in which in the guise of a shepherd, and in a pastoral setting, the poet mourns for a companion. Milton, lamenting the death of a fellow-student in *Lycidas*, refers to their academic companionship as follows :

“ For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill :  
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
We drove afield, and both together heard  
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright  
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Temper'd to the oaten flute,  
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long ;  
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.”

As a pure lament *The Bridge of Sighs*, by Thomas Hood, would be hard to surpass. “ Dull would he be of soul ” who, in reading these lines, felt not the dint of pity. The poet asks for no “ clap-trap ” sympathy, but for an understanding heart that sees beyond the sin to the cause.

### The Bridge of Sighs

One more Unfortunate  
Weary of breath,  
Rashly importunate,  
Gone to her death ;  
Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care ;  
Fashioned so slenderly,  
Young, and so fair !

Look at her garments  
Clinging like cerements ;  
Whilst the wave constantly  
Drips from her clothing ;  
Take her up instantly,  
Loving, not loathing.

Touch her not scornfully ;  
Think of her mournfully,  
Gently and humanly ;  
Not of the stains of her—  
All that remains of her  
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny  
Into her mutiny  
Rash and undutiful :  
Past all dishonour,  
Death has left on her  
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,  
One of Eve's family—  
Wipe those poor lips of hers  
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses  
Escaped from the comb,  
Her fair auburn tresses ;  
Whilst wonderment guesses  
Where was her home ?

Who was her father ?  
Who was her mother ?  
Had she a sister ?  
Had she a brother ?  
Or was there a dearer one  
Still, and a nearer one  
Yet, than all other ?

Alas for the rarity  
Of Christian charity  
Under the sun.

## THE STUDY OF POETRY

Oh, it was pitiful,  
Near a whole city full,  
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,  
Fatherly, motherly  
Feelings had changed :  
Love, by harsh evidence,  
Thrown from his eminence ;  
Even God's providence  
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver  
So far in the river,  
With many a light  
From window and casement,  
From garret to basement,  
She stood, with amazement,  
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March  
Made her tremble and shiver ;  
But not the dark arch,  
Or the black flowing river :  
Mad from life's history,  
Glad to death's mystery  
Swift to be hurl'd—  
Anywhere, anywhere  
Out of the world !

In she plunged boldly,  
No matter how coldly  
The rough river ran,—  
Over the brink of it,  
Picture it—think of it,  
Dissolute Man !  
Lave in it, drink of it,  
Then, if you can !

Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care ;  
Fashion'd so slenderly,  
Young, and so fair !



Ere her limbs frigidly  
Stiffen too rigidly,  
Decently, kindly,  
Smooth and compose them,  
And her eyes, close them,  
Staring so blindly—

Dreadfully staring  
Thro' muddy impurity,  
As when with the daring  
Last look of despairing  
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,  
Spurr'd by contumely,  
Cold inhumanity,  
Burning insanity,  
Into her rest.  
—Cross her hands humbly  
As if praying dumbly,  
Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,  
Her evil behaviour,  
And leaving, with meekness,  
Her sins to her Saviour.

In Shelley's *Adonais* lamentation changes abruptly into fierce invective directed against the reviewer who, according to the poet, has hastened the death of Keats by the cruelty of his criticism.

“What softer voice is hushed over the dead?  
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?  
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,  
In mockery of monumental stone,  
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?  
If it be he who, gentlest of the wise,  
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured, the departed  
one,  
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs  
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh !

What deaf and viperous murderer could crown  
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe ?

The nameless worm would now itself disown ;

It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone  
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,  
But what was howling in one breast alone,  
Silent with expectation of the song  
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !

Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,  
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !

But be thyself, and know thyself to be !

And ever at thy season be thou free

To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow ;

Remorse and self-contempt shall cling to thee,

Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,

And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now."

### *Reflective, Didactic, and Satiric Poetry.*

Still further removed from the true Lyric are the three types known respectively as Reflective, Didactic, and Satiric Poetry.

The Reflective Poem may be cast in either the epic or the lyric mould. Browning and Thomas Hardy have used even the dramatic form for this purpose. The themes are usually philosophic in character—attempts to expound the problems of human life and man's relation to the universe. Although the element of thought is important, such poetry is distinguished from Didactic Poetry by its imaginative qualities. When the theme is a mere treatise in verse in which the processes of the reason rather than of the imagination are followed the result is Didactic Poetry. An examination of the following passages will enable you to appreciate the difference between these two forms.

- (a) " Know, all the good that individuals find,  
Or God and nature meant to mere mankind,



Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense,  
 Lie in three words—Health, Peace, and Competence.  
 But Health consists with temperance alone ;  
 And Peace, O virtue ! Peace is all thine own.  
 The good or bad the gifts of fortune gain ;  
 But these less taste them, as they worse obtain.  
 Say, in pursuit of profit or delight,  
 Who risk the most, that take wrong means or right ?  
 Of vice or virtue, whether blest or curst,  
 Which meets contempt, or which compassion first ?  
 Count all the advantage prosperous vice attains,  
 'Tis but what virtue flies from and disdains ;  
 And grant the bad what happiness they would,  
 One they most want, which is, to pass for good."

POPE, *Essay on Man*.

- (b) " Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
 The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home :  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy,  
 But he beholds the light and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy ;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended ;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day."

WORDSWORTH.

Both passages pursue some philosophic truth, but one is touched with the highest poetic imagination, while the other (and this is the real test) would be more fittingly expressed in prose.

Satiric verse may be said merely to hover on the confines of genuine poetry. At its best its aim is to check





This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,  
 And blest with issue of a large increase ;  
 Worn out with business, did at length debate  
 To settle the succession of the state :  
 And, pond'ring, which of all his sons was fit  
 To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,  
 Cry'd, ' 'Tis resolv'd ; for Nature pleads, that he  
 Should only rule who most resembles me.  
 Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
 Mature in dullness from his tender years :  
 Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he,  
 Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.  
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,  
 But Shadwell never deviates into sense.  
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,  
 Strike through, and make a lucid interval ;  
 But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,  
 His rising fogs prevail upon the day.  
 Besides, his goodly fabrick fills the eye,  
 And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty :  
 Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain  
 And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.  
 Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,  
 Thou last great prophet of tautology.' ''

JOHN DRYDEN.

Dryden's pungent satire was a counterblast to a vulgar attack upon himself penned by Shadwell. We may admit the provocation and even appreciate the aptness of his gibes, but we cannot help feeling that such a passage is outside the province of genuine poetry. It must be remembered, however, that there are certain follies ridicule will remedy when other measures fail, and the student of literature must learn to distinguish between the physician and the torturer.

For various reasons which will be discussed later the rhyming couplet has proved to be the most appropriate vehicle for satire ; but that the bitterness of the draught is unaffected by the shape of the bottle the following sonnet will show. It is translated from the Italian of Rustico di Filippo by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.



## Of the Making of Master Messerin

When God had finish'd Master Messerin,  
 He really thought it something to have done :  
 Bird, man, and beast had got a chance in one,  
 And each felt flatter'd, it was hoped, therein.  
 For he is like a goose i' the windpipe thin,  
 And like a cameleopard high i' the loins ;  
 To which, for manhood, you'll be told he joins  
 Some kinds of flesh-hues and a callow chin.  
 As to his singing, he affects the crow ;  
 As to his learning, beasts in general ;  
 And sets all square by dressing like a man.  
 God made him, having nothing else to do ;  
 And proved there is not anything at all  
 He cannot make, if that's a thing He can

*Other Forms.*

There is, finally, a vast field of poetry which, in the main, lies outside the regions we have described. It includes such works as Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* and Byron's *Childe Harold*. Descriptions of characters and places provide occasional opportunities for reflection, humour, and satire. Let me quote by way of illustration a passage you all know from *The Deserted Village*. Goldsmith contrasts the former prosperity of Sweet Auburn with its present desolation, brought about by the decline of agricultural interests.

“ A time there was, ere England's griefs began,  
 When every rood of ground maintained its man ;  
 For him light labour spread her wholesome store,  
 Just gave what life required, but gave no more :  
 His best companions, innocence and health,  
 And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered ; trade's unfeeling train  
 Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain :  
 Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose,  
 Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose ;



And every want to opulence allied,  
And every pang that folly pays to pride.  
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,  
Those calm desires that asked but little room,  
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,  
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green ;  
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,  
And rural mirth and manners are no more."

After musing for a while on the charms of the village as he once knew it, he gives us a delightful portrait of the parson, which is succeeded by equally delightful vignettes of the schoolmaster and the village inn. Here is the schoolmaster :

" Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,  
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,  
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,  
The village master taught his little school :  
A man severe he was, and stern to view,  
I knew him well, and every truant knew ;  
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face ;  
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he ;  
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned :  
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
The village all declared how much he knew ;  
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too ;  
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,  
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.  
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,  
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still ;  
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around ;  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew  
That one small head could carry all he knew.  
But past is all his fame. The very spot,  
Where many a time he triumphed, is forgot."

Now the inn :

“ Near yonder thorn that lifts its head on high,  
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,  
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,  
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,  
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,  
And news much older than their ale went round.  
Imagination fondly stoops to trace  
The parlour splendours of that festive place ;  
The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,  
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door .  
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,  
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day ;  
The pictures placed for ornament and use,  
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose ,  
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,  
With aspen boughs and flowers and fennel gay ;  
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,  
Ranged o’er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain transitory splendours ! could not all  
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall !  
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart  
An hour’s importance to the poor man’s heart ;  
Thither no more the peasant shall repair  
To sweet oblivion of his daily care ;  
No more the farmer’s news, the barber’s tale,  
No more the woodman’s ballad shall prevail ;  
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,  
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear ;  
The host himself no longer shall be found  
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round ;  
Nor the coy maid, half-willing to be prest,  
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.”

### THE DRAMA

Drama constitutes the third of our great branches of Poetry. Although a good deal of drama has been written in prose, especially in recent times, the same



principles apply in the main, and the distinction need not be dwelt upon at present. To study the Drama as Poetry *alone*, in the way one studies a lyric or an epic, would give one a very imperfect notion of its character. It is, indeed, a combination of many arts; the poet, the actor, the producer, the painter, the designer of dresses, the electrician, the audience, and sometimes the musician, may all be called upon to contribute their quota. Having indicated this complexity, we propose to deal chiefly with the drama as literature, especially as poetic literature, and to content ourselves with such references to its other aspects as may be necessary for the elucidation of its principles.

In spite of the complex nature of the drama, a play must give an impression of unity if it is to satisfy the demands of art. The unity of the lyric is assured by the single animating impulse or passion which gives it birth. In the epic there is generally one outstanding personage whose achievements and "labours" constitute the "argument." The unity of the drama is more difficult to achieve, and we shall not understand the nature of this difficulty until we know a little more about drama itself.

The epic poet is a kind of historian recording deeds which were accomplished long ago. The lyrist gives us a glimpse of emotional experience seen through spectacles of his own favourite colour. In the drama we are given a representation of life as it is being lived by actual men and women. We are, as it were, present when incidents occur which set powerful forces in motion. We watch the growth of passions—love, hatred, revenge, ambition—and follow the remorseless workings of fate. We live for a brief while many lives, loving with the lover, hating with the hater, aspiring to crowns, railing against fate, confident, uncertain, despairing, philosophical. We exult in the plaudits of the multitude, shrink before the dagger of the assassin, feel the tortures of poison, and face death with a tri-



umphant smile. To create an impression of unity, therefore, in such an intricate affair as the drama is no easy matter. Much will depend upon the construction of the plot, and we must pause here to consider two rival theories of plot construction.

From an examination of the plays of Ancient Greece and Rome, and no doubt influenced by the theories of Aristotle, Renaissance writers formulated certain rules of dramatic construction which are still accepted by those who uphold the classic tradition. These rules are briefly described in Chapter VI., but for convenience they may be summarized here. First of all a play should be either a Tragedy or a Comedy : there should be no admixture of the tragic and the comic in any one play. No play should include more than one story or plot. The action should be confined to one place, and the time the action would occupy in real life should approximate as nearly as possible to the time taken to represent the action on the stage. For those who observed these laws the problem of unity of construction presented no extraordinary difficulty. Events which would have occupied several acts in Romantic Drama are condensed and narrated at the opening of the classical play, and all we see is a single action which is more or less a kind of final act. Those who oppose the classical tradition refuse to make Tragedy and Comedy mutually exclusive. They claim that the scene of action may be changed at will, sometimes to distant places. In addition to the main action, one or more subordinate actions may be employed to emphasize or set off by contrast the main plot. The events represented may be separated by considerable periods of time, the dramatist "turning the accomplishment of many years into an hour-glass."

Some of you may be fortunate enough to study the plays of Sophocles, Euripides, Æschylus, and Aristophanes in the original. Those who know no Greek have the excellent translations of Professor Gilbert

Murray to consult. Failing these, there is Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the nearest approach in English to the classical plays of Ancient Greece. As this play is, or should be, within the reach of every boy and girl at school, we will compare its structure with that of a typical Romantic play. Milton describes his plot as follows :

“ Samson made Captive, Blind, and now in the Prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a Festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open Air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can ; then by his old Father Manoa, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom ; lastly, that this Feast was proclaim'd by the Philistines as a day of Thanks-giving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoa then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistian Lords for Samson's redemption ; who in the meanwhile is visited by other persons ; and lastly by a publick Officer to require his coming to the Feast before the Lords and People, to play or shew his strength in their presence ; he at first refuses, dismissing the publick Officer with absolute denial to come : at length perswaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him. The Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoa returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his Son's deliverance ; in the midst of which discourse an Ebrew comes in haste confusedly at first ; and afterward more distinctly relating the Catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself ; wherewith the Tragedy ends.”

You will notice (1) that the scene remains unchanged throughout ; (2) that the action is continuous, events occurring elsewhere and necessary to the development



of the plot are narrated by chorus, friends, or messengers, whose share in the plot is strictly subordinated to that of the chief character, Samson ; (3) that at no time is the stage left empty ; and (4) that in Milton's own words " the circumscription of time wherein the whole Drama begins and ends is, according to ancient rule, and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours." Finally, it should be noted that a tragic note prevails throughout, there being no comic relief of any kind.

Take now *The Merchant of Venice* as a typical example of Romantic Drama. Here are at least two considerable plots and several minor episodes. The scene is shifted constantly from Venice to Belmont and back again. There are elements of both tragedy and comedy, sometimes found together in the same scene. The events are distributed over seven days, but, in addition, there are intervals—now a day, now a week, now a fortnight, and so on ; in fact, the whole period covered by the action extends to well over a month. In spite of these complexities there is nothing chaotic about the play. What we have to realize is this, that dramatic unity meant one thing to the writer of classic drama and another to the Romantic dramatist, that the one aimed at exclusiveness and the other at comprehensiveness. The unity of a Romantic play is achieved by the harmonious blending of many parts to one end. Consider for a moment what Shakespeare has done in *The Merchant of Venice*. His material consisted of the following plots or stories :

1. The *Antonio-Shylock* story.
2. The *Bassanio-Portia* story.
3. The *Lorenzo-Jessica* story.
4. The story of the rings.
5. The *Gratiano-Nerissa* story.

Now note how they are woven into one dramatic fabric. Bassanio borrows from Antonio, who borrows from Shylock : by this means Antonio is to be involved in



terrible danger and Bassanio to be prostrated by distress on his behalf. Plots 1 and 2 are already merging. Now the loan was also the means whereby Bassanio was enabled to prosecute his suit to Portia, who, in the end, succeeded in rescuing Antonio from the danger the same loan had brought upon him. Take the third story, which concerns a friend of Antonio (Plot 1) and the daughter of Shylock (Plot 2). This story is used to intensify the tragic note of the play by increasing Shylock's resentment and thirst for revenge; moreover, it is Lorenzo and Jessica who bring news of Antonio's accumulated disasters just as Bassanio is rejoicing in his own success at Belmont, made possible by the generosity of Antonio. In the same scene is found the germ of the fourth story, which helps to round off the play after the trial scene. Finally, the Gratiano-Nerissa story serves as a foil throughout to the greater love story of Portia and Bassanio.

It is the skilful dovetailing together of these varied elements, and their harmonious development as a whole, that constitute the unity of the play. Life, argue the Romantics, is too complex a business to be represented within the pedantic limitations imposed by the classic theorists: to unravel the complexities of life and represent them piecemeal is to ignore the bearing they have on each other. They affirm that complexity is not inconsistent with unity, and that when many diverse elements co-operate to produce a coherent whole there is little, if any, loss in dramatic unity, and a great gain in truthfulness to life.

### *Types of Drama.*

The essence of drama is conflict of some kind or other. It may be the conflict of human rivalry, the clash of interests, the war of opposing political, religious, or social forces. Sometimes a single man

“with himself at war” will provide “ample room and verge enough” for the unrolling of a tragic design. At other times man is shown battling bravely but ineffectively against some superhuman power, against which there can be no effective armoury of man’s fashioning.

*Tragedy* and *Comedy* form the two main divisions of the Drama. The principle of conflict is seen at work in both, but while Tragedy deals with issues of a lofty or solemn nature, with death or failure as the result of human endeavour, Comedy is concerned with themes of a familiar nature, in which life is depicted on a lower emotional level, and the victims emerge safe, if chastened, from the struggle. Speaking generally, we may say that Tragedy shows us the great passions at war with one another or with other forces outside, and greater than, themselves : Comedy chronicles the misunderstandings and skirmishes in the field of manners. That Tragedy should find its best expression in Poetry, and Comedy in Prose, is a natural consequence of this distinction.

The practice of mingling Tragedy with Comedy gave rise to the *Tragi-Comedy* or *Dramatic Romance*. Such a play contains all the elements which are found in Tragedy : up to a certain point, in fact, a tragic conclusion seems inevitable ; then a sudden and unforeseen means of escape is found and the play proceeds to a happy or comparatively happy conclusion. Of such a kind are Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

The *Masque*, as a form of drama, had too short a history and too limited a vogue to deserve more than a passing notice. Dramatic interest was often subordinated to other attractions—music, elaborate scenic effects, dancing—in fact, the masque had much in common with the opera of a later day. There was no standard type, but in most there was found room for allegory and farce, the latter element providing the



“anti-masque,” a species of rude buffoonery. Owing to the enormous expense involved in its production the masque was essentially a diversion of the rich, and was often the *pièce de résistance* at important festive gatherings of noble families. Milton’s *Comus* survives by virtue of its literary charm ; as drama it has no great significance. But Milton avoided in *Comus* much of the cumbersome machinery and spectacular extravagances of the fashionable masque. A better example of the masque which was “all the rage” in Stuart times is Shirley’s *Triumph of Peace*, produced in 1633 at a cost of £21,000.

I have referred in earlier chapters to the mock epic and the mock ballad. The irreverent spirit of burlesque diverts itself also at the expense of drama. Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Fielding’s *Tom Thumb the Great* have had more than a temporary popularity. In fact, both of these clever “skits” have been frequently revived within recent years. They have a vitality all their own which accounts for their survival, but to any one who has read any of the plays they were intended to ridicule they are a sheer delight.

There is a strong element of burlesque in modern Revue, but here the question of literary value does not arise.

Finally, one may mention the *Literary Drama* or *Closet Drama*, so called because, in spite of its merits as literature, it is unsuitable for stage production. Browning’s *Pippa Passes*, Byron’s *Manfred*, and Hardy’s *The Dynasts* may be instanced. Very few of our greater poets seem to have had much knowledge of the essentials of dramatic technique. A few, like Browning, have recognized their limitations, and have written plays which are frankly intended for the fire-side and not for the stage.

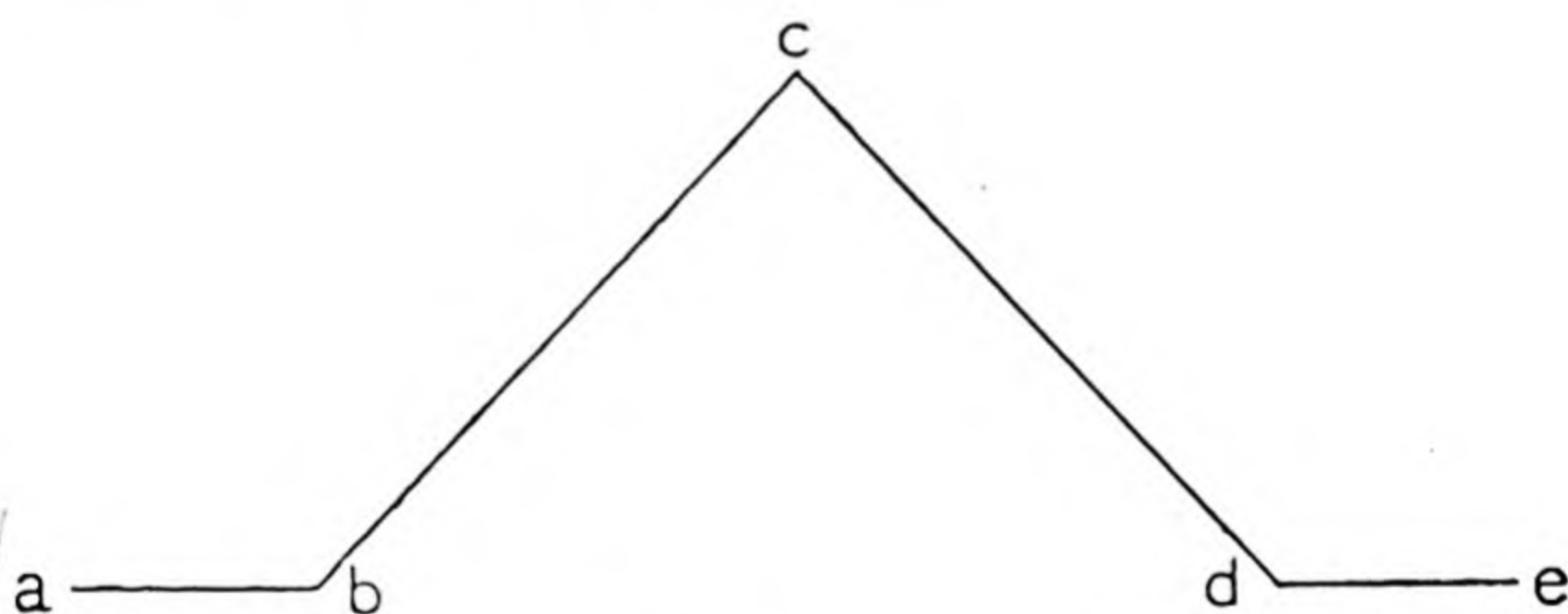
In a book of this size there is no room to discuss the general principles of dramatic technique. We may



return, however, for a few moments to the question of plot construction, which we should now be able to consider in greater detail.

### *The Unfolding of a Plot.*

Conflict of some sort being the very essence of drama, the succeeding phases through which a conflict normally passes are to be found in the unfolding of a dramatic plot. There is the initial incident, the cause of the strife ; the development of the conflict, generally accompanied by a rise in feeling ; the crisis or turning-point, when one of the contending parties or principles obtains the upper hand ; the gradual revelation of the consequences of victory and defeat ; and finally, the rounding off of the plot when the inevitable result of the conflict has been reached. It is customary to illustrate these stages by what is termed a "dramatic line," thus :



*ab* = the initial incident, the incitement to strife.

*bc* = the development of the struggle.

*c* = the crisis or turning-point.

*cd* = the gradual unfolding of the consequences of victory or defeat.

*de* = the final stage, the inevitable outcome of the conflict.

Such a diagram serves only to indicate the general direction of dramatic movement. It does not indicate the various stages of the conflict when the movement

is uncertain, fitful, now rapid, now slow, varying with the changing prospects of the contestants. This is particularly true of what is called the "rising action" (*bc* in our diagram); after the crisis there is less uncertainty as to the result, and the movement is therefore less liable to interruption. Let us consider, for example, the dramatic growth of the conspiracy in *Julius Cæsar*, a play you all know. You will remember that Shakespeare did all he could to commend the cause of the conspiracy and to lower the prestige of Cæsar in the first part of the play. What happens after is another matter. For the present I want you to follow Shakespeare's lead.

Act I., Scene i. The starting-point. The extravagant popular adulation of Cæsar and his almost royal triumph furnish the justification for the conspiracy.

Act I., Scene ii. Our sympathies are drawn to the conspiracy by the enthusiasm of Cassius and away from Cæsar by Casca's cynical references to him. The movement is checked for a while owing to doubt among the conspirators as to the chances of gaining Brutus's support. Cassius undertakes to remove these doubts, and the prospects seem momentarily brighter.

Act I., Scene iii. A terrible storm arises, full of prodigies and portents. The prospects are full of uncertainty as Casca, Cicero, and Cassius in turn interpret the unusual commotion of the heavens and other "portentous things," each according to his own philosophy.

Act II., Scene i. A definite step forward. Brutus throws in his lot with the conspirators, and the assassination of Cæsar is timed for the following day. Decius undertakes to bring Cæsar to the Capitol.

Act II., Scene ii. The next day comes a further check. Calpurnia, terrified by the storm and the prodigies, and their possible significance, urges Cæsar to absent himself from the Capitol. Cæsar hesitates, but



Decius finally induces him to go. Cæsar is ready to set out when the other conspirators arrive to "escort" him. The conspiracy is advanced a stage further.

Act II., Scene iii. Another check. Artemidorus takes up his position on the line of Cæsar's route to the Capitol, ready to give him a written warning of the fate that threatens him. More suspense.

Act II., Scene iv. Portia (to whom Brutus has revealed the plot) seems likely by her agitation to arouse the suspicion of the soothsayer. Her agitation is also communicated to the audience.

Act III., Scene i. Cæsar appears *en route*, surrounded by the conspirators, whose purposes seem as good as achieved. But the end is not yet. Imagine their uneasiness when the soothsayer's warning voice is heard in reply to Cæsar's confident reminder :

*Cæsar.* The Ides of March are come.

*Soothsayer.* Ay, Cæsar ; but not gone.

Hard on the heels of this comes another danger, even more disturbing. Artemidorus is proffering his incriminating document to Cæsar. Only the amazing self-confidence of their victim saves the situation. He refuses the document and enters the Capitol. Now imagine the effect of the following incident on men whose nerves have already been severely tried.

*Popilius.* I wish your enterprise to-day may thrive.

*Cassius.* What enterprise, Popilius ?

*Popilius.* Fare you well. *[Advances to Cæsar.]*

*Brutus.* What said Popilius Lena ?

*Cassius.* He wished to-day our enterprise might thrive. I fear our purpose is discovered.

*Brutus.* Look, how he makes to Cæsar : mark him.

For the moment the conspirators are thrown com-



Success

— Uninterrupted progress to success.

— Brutus restores confidence.

— Popilius's enigmatic greeting.

— Cæsar enters the Capitol.

— Cæsar refuses it.

— Artemidorus offers his document.

— Cæsar ignores it.

— The soothsayer's warning.

— Cæsar approaches the Capitol.

— Portia's agitation and its possible dangers.

— Artemidorus prepares to warn Cæsar.

— Decius's argument prevails.

— Calpurnia's solicitations and Cæsar's hesitation.

— Brutus joins the conspiracy.

— The storm and prodigies and their various interpretations.

— Cassius confident that he can win him over.

— Doubts as to the attitude of Brutus.

{ Enthusiasm of Cassius.

{ Depreciation of Cæsar.

Initial

incident.

pletely off their balance, and Cassius talks wildly. Brutus is the first to recover.

*Brutus.*

Cassius, be constant ;

Popilius Lena speaks not of our purposes,

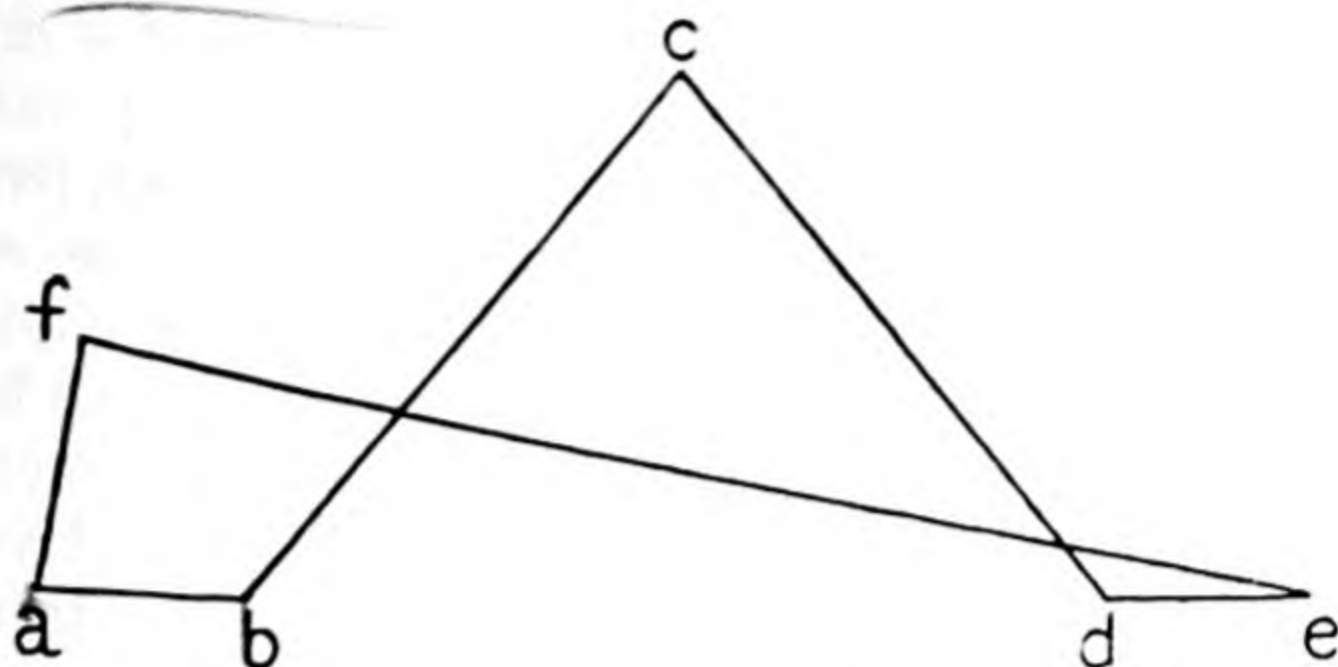
For, look, he smiles, and Cæsar does not change.

The danger is past. Everything now proceeds according to plan, and this scene shows the conspirators at the highest point of their success.

We shall now be able to realize what the line *bc* in our earlier diagram really represents. The diagram on page 85 should be read from the bottom upwards. It is this inconstant movement that gives dramatic force to a play. The emotions of an audience are rarely stirred by the representation of uninterrupted success. A period of suspense, when hope alternates with despair, produces a far greater emotional disturbance than a state of certainty, a fact that dramatists generally recognize in the construction of their plots. We must remember, therefore, that when the line of dramatic movement is mentioned it should suggest to our minds a kind of barometric reading or temperature chart of the emotional state, indicating a general rise and fall in temper or confidence, but also recording successive periods of agitation, doubt, or despair. If we keep this caution in mind we shall be able to use the "line" in its simplest form without falling into error.

Several dramatic lines may be traced in a single play. The line of emotional movement may coincide with the line of plot-movement, as in *Julius Cæsar*. In *King Lear* the two lines touch only at the beginning and the end of the play, except when they cross. The emotional line begins after the initial causative incident, rises to its greatest height in the middle of the play (where the three types of madness meet), and falls gradually until zero is reached again at the end of the play. Structurally, *King Lear* may be called a prob-

~~lem play.~~ The problem is set in the first scene, and the rest of the play is devoted to its elucidation. Thus we have :



Passion Plot {  $ab$  = initial causative incident.  
 $bc$  = growth of passion to crisis or turning-point.  
 $cd$  = decline of passion to zero.  
 $de$  = conclusion.

Problem Plot {  $af$  = problem stated.  
 $fe$  = solution of problem.

### *Characterization, Dialogue, and Economy.*

There is something very pleasing about a well-made play that has no "loose ends," but no amount of skill in plot-construction will of itself make a play great: the reputation of a play turns in the end on its characters. It is to their characters and not to their plots that *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* owe their lasting appeal. "Take care of character," says Mr. Galsworthy, "action and dialogue will take care of themselves." Certainly action and dialogue should appear to arise naturally out of character. This, at any rate, we all recognize. "Having once selected subject and characters," he continues, "the dramatist is just, gentle, restrained, neither gratifying his lust for praise at the expense of his offspring, nor using them as puppets to flout his audience. . . . Being himself the nature that brought them forth, he guides them in the course predestined at their conception. So only have they a chance of defying Time, which is always lying in wait

X Cf. *Monkton* ? "Such a . . ."

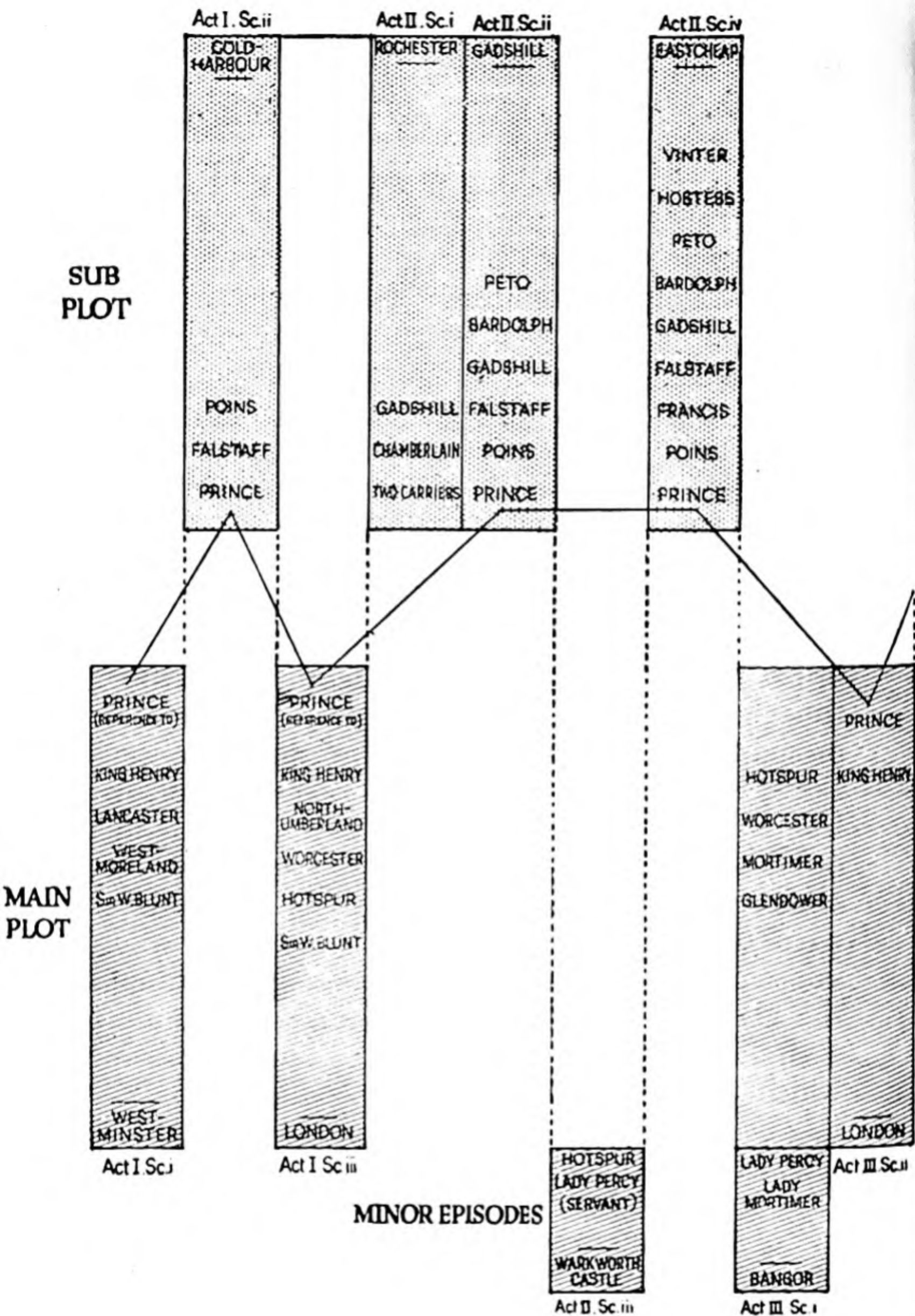


to destroy the false, topical, or fashionable, all—in a word—that is not based on the permanent elements of human nature. The perfect dramatist rounds up his characters and facts within the ring-fence of a dominant idea which fulfils the craving of his spirit ; having got them there, he suffers them to live their own lives.” Faulty dialogue is as serious a blemish almost as weak characterization. I remember seeing in a London theatre a play in which the dialogue seemed to have been distributed haphazard among the characters. There was wit in abundance, and the plot was cleverly contrived, but the extraordinary detachment of dialogue from character gave one the impression of a puppet show in which the motive force was string instead of human passion. What impresses me most about a great play is that the dramatist should be able to give us within the limits of a single performance or a single reading so complete and vivid a conception of his characters. One learns more of Hamlet or Viola within two and a half hours than one learns of one’s acquaintances through years of intimacy ; and there is still more knowledge stored up for future occasions. This power of condensation, or dramatic economy, call it what you will, is a most important item in dramatic technique. It is necessary in dialogue, too. In a good play there are no “idle” words ; every sentence should be studied for the light it throws on the development of either plot or character. In a play like *Hamlet*, the chief character is, so to speak, never absent from the stage. He appears not only in his own acts and words, but also in the behaviour and utterances of others. An estimate of any dramatic character based on his own part in the play is bound to be misleading and incomplete. To understand the man Malvolio one must not only listen to his own fatuities and watch his absurd posturing ; one must watch the behaviour of others towards him and learn from their lips what Sir Toby thought of him, what

Maria, what Fabian, and what Feste, and even then one's notion will have to be corrected by Olivia's estimate of her steward.

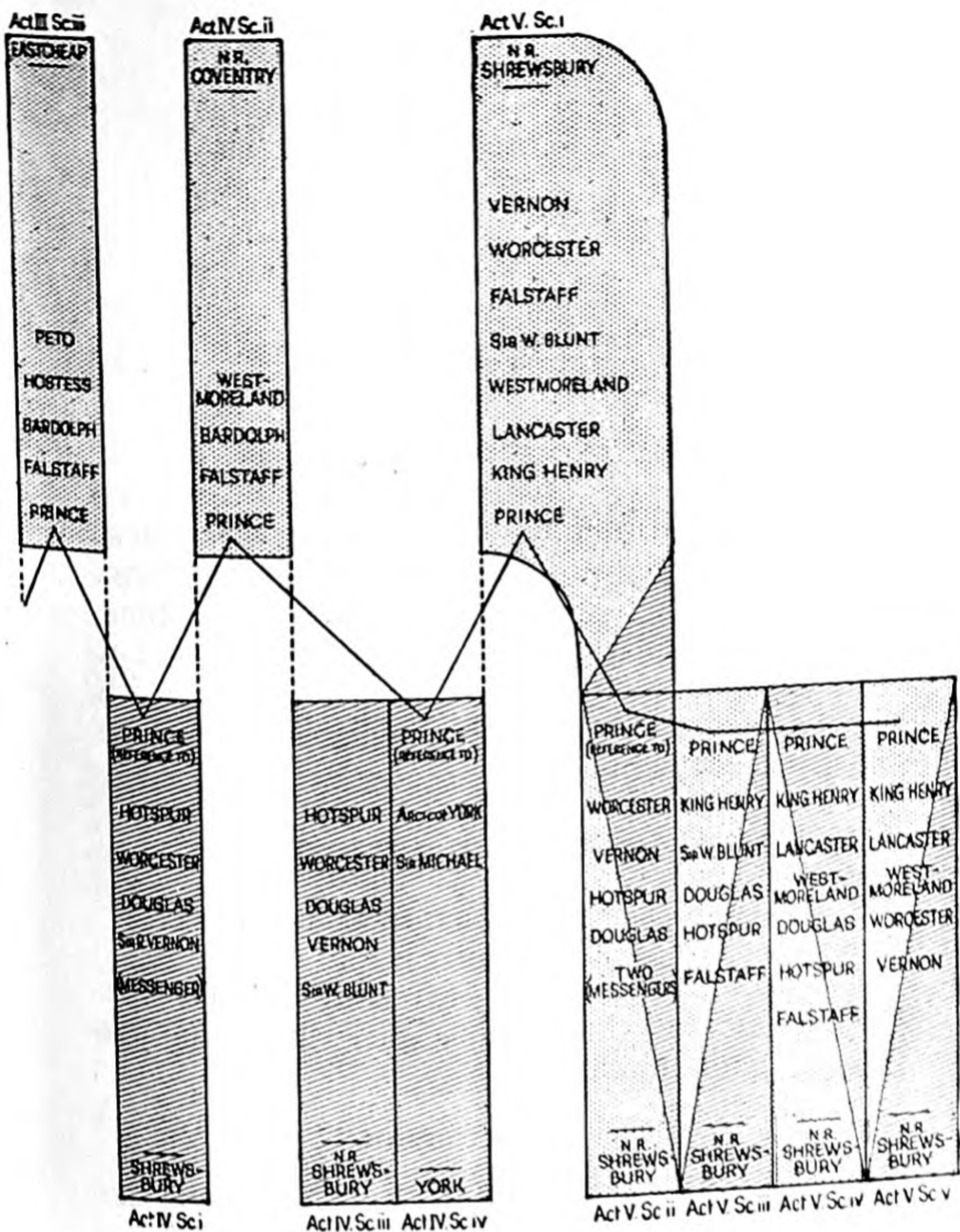
The necessity of making every element of a play contribute to some definite purpose is imposed by the narrow time limits within which any dramatic representation must be confined. The novelist has no such limits. That is why most novels are impossible to dramatize. Dramatic economy is so important a branch of play-craft that its function in any play you happen to be studying should not be lost sight of. In *The Merchant of Venice* we have seen how Shakespeare repeatedly makes the same person supply the need of two separate plots, and how several plots may be developing alongside in the same scene. The bond is actually made to serve two contrary purposes. It brings Antonio within an ace of death and at the same time is the very means by which his salvation is brought from Belmont: but for the loan the fair Portia would have remained at Belmont worshipped from afar by the impecunious Bassanio. The following diagram illustrates another device which Shakespeare frequently uses in order to bind the different parts of his plot together in an economical way. If you will follow Prince Hal's movements throughout the play you will see what I mean. Edmund serves a similar purpose in *King Lear*, the plot-scheme of which you should work out for yourselves. By enlarging the diagram you will be able to include in the rectangles a scene-by-scene analysis of the action plot to supplement the character plot. The mere working out of such diagrams will give you a firm grasp of the play as a whole.





# CHARACTER PLOT





# OF "HENRY IV" Part I

## CHAPTER III

### PROSODY AND KINDRED MATTERS

IN an earlier chapter we decided that most great poetry, if we omit poetic prose, is in metrical form. The metre of English verse is based partly on time, but more particularly on stress. In this respect it differs from the metre of most French poetry, which bases its line on the number of syllables. Compare the two following lines :

(a) " I pass, like night, from land to land."

(b) " On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky."

Both lines are tetrameters—*i.e.* each line has four stresses, but while (a) has but eight syllables, (b) has eleven. Again, the line

" Break, break, break,"

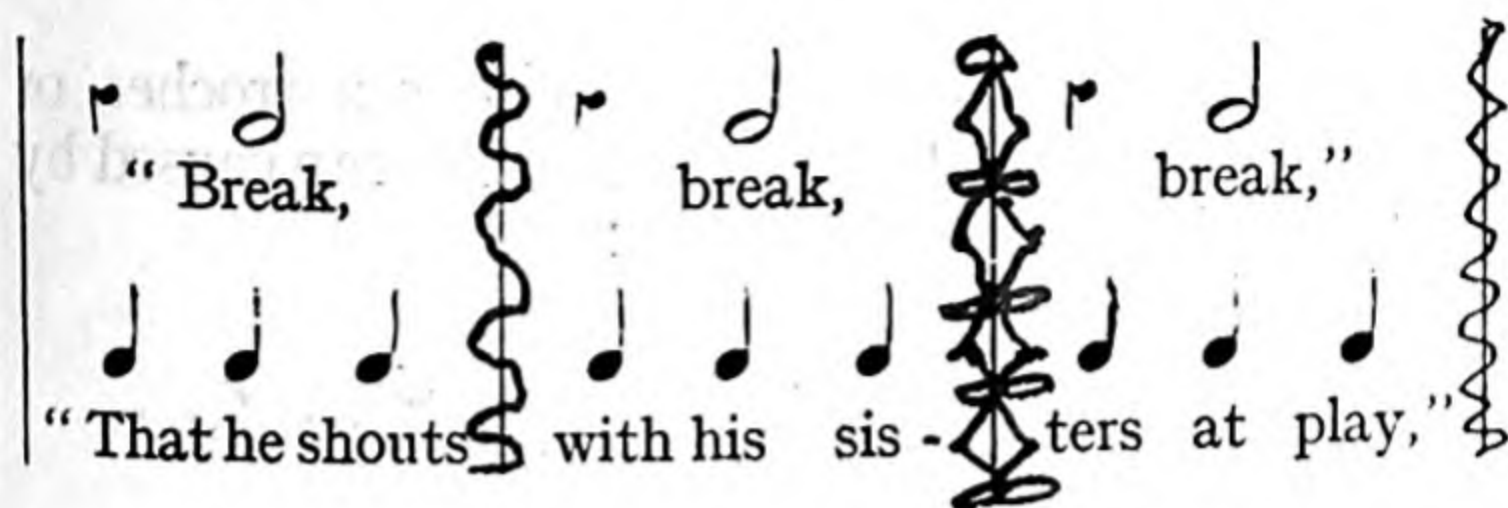
has three stresses and only three syllables, while the line

" That he shouts with his sisters at play,"

with the same number of stresses, has nine syllables.

The element of *time*, however, must not be neglected, and will be considered later on. It will be sufficient to note here that the above two lines, although differing so greatly in the number of syllables, take the same

time to read. This may be illustrated by calling in the help of musical notation, thus :



where each bar is of equal length. There is this difference, however, between Poetry and Music : in the former *stress* predominates, in the latter, *time*.

Examination of the metrical practice of English poets has led to the formulation of metrical rules and a metrical terminology, the latter borrowed from classical prosody. Without prejudice to what we may have to say later on, we will state them here. In what follows, the symbol (✓) indicates a strong or stressed syllable, and the symbol (∪) indicates a weak or unstressed one.

The unit of metre is the *foot*, of which the following types are recognized :

Name.	Example.
The <i>iambus</i> or <i>iambic foot</i>	(∪ ✓) ab <u>out</u> .
The <i>trochee</i> or <i>trochaic foot</i>	(✓ ∪) lad <u>ies</u> .
The <i>anapæst</i> or <i>anapæstic foot</i>	(∪ ∪ ✓) of the de <u>ad</u> .
The <i>dactyl</i> or <i>dactylic foot</i>	(✓ ∪ ∪) ut <u>ter</u> ance.
The <i>amphibrach</i> or <i>amphibrachic foot</i>	(∪ ✓ ∪) re <u>cl</u> ining.

To these are sometimes added :

The *monosyllable foot* (✓)

Break.



The *spondee* (✓ ✓).

gréy skíes.

The monosyllabic foot is often either a trochee or iambus shortened, a pause filling up the gap caused by the missing weak syllable, thus :

“(paŭse) Break, (paŭse) bréak, (paŭse) bréak.”

In the spondee, the stress falling on one syllable hovers over the next, giving a stress to what would normally be a weak syllable, as in the line :

| “ Álone | on a wide | wide sea.” |

If you disregard the spondee and the monosyllabic foot, you will see that

1. Every foot must contain *one*, and only one, strong syllable. It follows that the number of strong or stressed syllables will determine the number of feet in any line.

2. No foot must contain less than two syllables or more than three.

We shall see later that modern practice has discarded some of these laws.

The *line* is named according to the number of feet it contains. The following are the types most commonly found :

No. of feet.	Name of line.
1.	Unimeter (or Monometer).
2.	Dimeter.
3.	Trimeter.
4.	Tetrameter.
5.	Pentameter.
6.	Hexameter.
7.	Heptameter.

The metrical description or *scansion* of a line will indicate both the number and also the kind of feet used. Study the following examples :

| " Until | the has- | ting day." | (Iambic trimeter.)

| " Has run." | (Iambic unimeter.)

| " Teach me | half the | madness." |  
(Trochaic trimeter.)

| " When such a | time cometh." |  
(Amphibrachic dimeter.)

| " And crushed | and torn | beneath | his claws |  
the prince- | ly hun- | ters lay." |  
(Iambic heptameter.)

| " With an arm- | y of heath- | enish names." |  
(Anapæstic trimeter.)

| " Fashioned so | slenderly." | (Dactylic dimeter.)

| " And with | their dark- | ness durst | affront |  
his light." | (Iambic pentameter.)

| " But we stead- | fastly gazed | on the face |  
that was dead." | (Anapæstic tetrameter.)

It must not be imagined that all verse is so regular as the examples given above. If this were so the result would be monotony and tediousness. Just as in music the composer runs the changes on the constituent elements of the bar, so the poet varies the feet in





In a poem of sixteen lines the poet has used eleven varieties. Notice that the general movement is Anapæstic in character, and that the commonest variations are Iambic feet which belong to the same order—*i.e.* those feet which end with a stressed syllable. This is termed *Rising Measure*, while feet which begin with a stressed syllable and so fall away to an unstressed syllable are said to be in *Falling Measure*. In *Falling Measure* you will therefore expect to find Trochees associated with Dactyls, as in the following lines :

“ Look at her garments,  
Clinging like cerements ;  
Whilst the wave constantly  
Drips from her clothing.”

When a foot of *Falling Measure* is introduced into a line which, in its general movement, is of the opposite type, the effect is often startling. The whole character of the line seems to change abruptly. Note the effect of introducing single trochaic feet into the following lines of iambic measure :

“ And when the Prince  
Had put his horse in motion towards the knight,  
*Struck at* him with his whip, and cut his cheek,  
The Prince’s blood *spirted* upon the scarf.”

Now examine the following lines :

(a) “ From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale  
calls not.”

(b) “ Old Meg she was a gipsy.”

(c) “ Jenny kissed me when we met.”

(d) “ Lightly they’ll talk of the spirit that’s gone ”

It is obvious that the general movement of (a) is anapæstic, and of (b) iambic. This being so, the final syllable in each line is in excess of the normal foot. When such an extra syllable occurs the line is said to be *Hypermetric*. In (c), on the other hand, the final foot lacks a syllable, and in (d) two more syllables would be required to complete the normal foot. Such lines are said to be *Catalectic*. It should be noticed that the extra and missing syllables are always unstressed. Otherwise, according to rule, another foot would occur. Often a line may be scanned in two ways. In (d) above, for example, the catalectic foot may be taken to occur either at the beginning or at the end of the line, thus :

| “ Lightly they’ll | talk of the | spirit that’s |  
dead ( ) .” |

or

| “ ( ) Light | ly they’ll talk | of the spi |  
rit that’s dead.” |

In such cases the scansion should be determined by the general movement of the poem.

### *Modern Experiments.*

So far we have considered the laws of metre as they have been commonly accepted. But modern poets have been experimenting, and have invented rhythms which refuse to conform with these conventions. Here are two lines from Nora Holland’s *Ships of Old Renown*. I shall mark the feet first according to the accepted canons, and then as I think we are expected to read them.

(a) “ Triremes of the Roman cruising down to Antioch,  
Longships of the Northmen, galleons of Spain.”

(b) " Triremes of the Roman cruising down to Antioch,  
Longships of the Northmen, galleons of Spain."

If you do not prefer the second method of scansion as conveying more justly and effectively the slow, ponderous movements of the ships, I shall be greatly surprised. Note, too, the nature of the change. We have now lines of *four* feet in place of one of *seven* (the first line) and one of *six* (the second line). Read the whole poem aloud in both ways, and then decide which rendering you prefer. As a further illustration take *A Song of England*, by Alfred Noyes :

" There is a song of England that none shall ever sing ;  
So sweet it is and fleet it is  
That none whose words are not as fleet as birds upon  
the wing,  
And regal as her mountains,  
And radiant as her fountains," etc.

You may read this in two ways :

(a)        ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /  
    ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / , etc.,

or you may prefer (and I hope you do) :

(b)        ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ /  
    ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ /  
              ∪ / ∪ ∪ ∪ / ∪ , etc.,

which, if I may be excused the pun, is another pair of shoes altogether. Here are several other passages that rejoice in the new-found freedom :



“ It’s a long, lone watch that he’s a-keeping there,  
 And a dead cold night that lags a-creeping there,  
 While the months and the years roll over him  
 And the great ships go by.”

“ It works in me like madness to bid me say good-bye,  
 For the seas call, and the stars call, and Ó the call of  
 the sky.”

As early as the seventeenth century Andrew Marvell had discovered the charm of the latter type :

“ Annihilating all that’s made,  
 To a green thought in a green shade.”

Before the time of Coleridge, however, such experiments were rare.

### *Unequal Stresses.*

Read the following passage aloud :

“ With these came they who, from the bordering flood  
 Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts  
 Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names  
 Of Baalim and Ashtaroth—those male,  
 These feminine. For Spirits, when they please,  
 Can either sex assume, or both . . .”

These lines, like the rest of *Paradise Lost*, are in iambic pentameter, and so have five stressed syllables in each line. It is obvious, however, that the stresses are not of equal strength. A distinction is often made in scansion by marking the stronger stresses with a double accent (").

“ With these came they who, from the bordering flood  
 Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts,”

and so on.

*The Element of Time.*

In an earlier section I referred to *Time* as an element in metrical composition. The two lines I have just quoted will serve to illustrate its significance. In the first line, "from" has a relatively weak stress. This is compensated for by the pause made at the comma. In the second line the last syllable of "Euphrates," though unaccented, is a *long* syllable, thus compensating for the relatively weak stress on the following word "to."

" Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang syne ? "

Here again the element of time operates. By dwelling on the long vowel sounds in the second line we make good the omission of unstressed syllables. In music the problem is easily solved by giving two notes each to "auld" and "lang" and lengthening the note of "syne." We find, therefore, that *Time* by means of (a) pausing, and (b) lengthening, is made to compensate for both weakness of stress and the omission of unstressed syllables.

*The Cæsure.*

We have already seen that a pause may fill the place of missing unstressed syllables. There is another kind of pause which is dependent upon the phrasing of the verse. This is called the Cæsure. For obvious reasons it is found only in the longer measures. By varying the position of the cæsure the poet introduces pleasing changes of cadence and his verse gains in flexibility. Note its use in the following typical passage from Milton.

" This deep world  
Of darkness do we dread ? || How oft amidst  
Thick clouds and dark || doth Heaven's all-ruling Sire  
Choose to reside, || His glory unobscured,

And with the majesty of darkness round  
 Covers His throne ; || from whence deep thunders roar  
 Must'ring their rage, || and Heaven resembles Hell ?  
 As He our darkness, || cannot we His light  
 Imitate when we please ? || This desert soil  
 Wants not her hidden lustre, || gems are gold ;  
 Nor want we skill or art, || from whence to raise  
 Magnificence ; || and what can Heaven show more ? ”

It requires little imagination to realize why Blank Verse, with its constantly shifting pauses, should be the most fitting measure for dramatic poetry in which the language is expected to give the impression of actual speech.

Another kind of pause, not necessarily coinciding with the cæsure but always ready to give way to it, is the pause which the ear seems naturally to expect in any given measure. These natural pauses seem to occur as follows :

In pentameter lines	. At the end of the 2nd or 3rd foot.
In hexameter lines	. At the end of the 3rd foot.
In heptameter lines	. At the end of the 4th foot.
In octometer lines	. . At the end of the 4th foot.

So ready is the ear to catch this pause, that the longer measures, unless they are actually seen, are divided by the ear into shorter lines.

A hexameter becomes	2 trimeters.
A heptameter becomes	1 tetrameter plus 1 trimeter.
An octometer becomes	2 tetrameters.

Thus the line :

“ Lover that woest in vain Earth's imperturbable heart,”  
 becomes to the ear :

“ Lover that woest in vain  
 Earth's imperturbable heart.”



It is necessary to point out that when this occurs it is frequently not the ear that is at fault but the reader, who may have given to the natural pause more point than the poet intended. A long line of poetry should be read as one line and not as two.

### *Uniformity and Variety in Metre.*

Much of the pleasure we derive from variations in metre proceeds from the fact that all the time the normal measure is "singing a quiet tune" to the ear. In other words, it is only because the ear relates them to the normal movement that the variations have either force or beauty. "Variation," says Mr. Ormond, "is successful only when it brings into relief, not obscures, our perception of underlying uniformity." The total effect, therefore, is one of uniformity in the whole, and variety in the parts. In the work of the great masters of versification these variations will repay careful study. They are frequently characteristic of the poet's individual art. It is certainly an aspect of his work which the poet would have us keep in mind. Frequently the variations have some definite relation to the meaning of the words. They may be used to represent both sound and movement, and a complete change from one measure to another may indicate a corresponding emotional change. At this point a word of caution is necessary. Many books have been written of late years on the principles of English prosody. Not a few of them have succeeded in revealing intricate metrical relationships which neither poet nor reader had hitherto suspected. Unfortunately (or fortunately, perhaps) there is as yet no general agreement on the most debatable points, and those who enjoy the poet's skill without understanding the principles of his prosody may reasonably decide to "leave the wise to wrangle." The great fault of the traditional system of scansion was that it endeavoured to compel

every line to conform with the normal type. Thus the first line of *Paradise Lost* was scanned as follows:

“ Ŏf mán's first dísobédíence, and the frúit,”

giving a strong stress to a syllable that could not sustain it. If a line seems unusual in the metrical sense, we must neither force it by unnatural scansion into the normal mould, nor condemn it as a bad line. We shall do the poet more justice and advantage ourselves more if we accept its strangeness and seek the poet's motive in disturbing from time to time the even flow of his verse. Although, normally, iambic pentameters require five strong stresses, the above line has only four. But properly read the line is no shorter than the normal line of five stresses, the missing stress being made good by the incomplete elision in the word “disobedience” and the pause that follows it. The poet may make what experiments he chooses if only the normal pulse is given out often enough to give metrical character to the poem as a whole. About the principles of metrical structure the poets themselves are, with few exceptions, silent. One suspects that if they read the learned treatises on this subject that appear from time to time they must heave a sigh of relief that poets are born, not made. This does not mean that the poet achieves his metrical felicities without purpose or effort, and that in consequence we may disregard his metrical practice in estimating the quality of his art. All it amounts to is this: abstruse theories and elaborate systems of codification that have accumulated around the measures of the poets are devised mainly by the critic, and are not necessary steps to Parnassus. If this is understood, a discriminating study of prosody may be pursued with profit. For this purpose I have given below a few interesting specimens of that branch of poetic art. Observe their character and describe their effects.



(a) " But I have seen,  
 Pointing her shapely shadows from the dawn  
 And image tumbled on a rose-swept bay,  
 A drowsy ship of some yet older day ;  
 And, wonder's breath indrawn,  
 Thought I—who knows—who knows—but in that  
 same

(Fished up beyond Ææa, patched up new  
 —Stern painted brighter blue—)  
 That talkative, bald-headed seaman came  
 (Twelve patient comrades sweating at the oar)  
 From Troy's doom-crimson shore,  
 And with great lies about his wooden horse  
 Set the crew laughing and forgot his course."

(b) " The night is chill ; the forest bare ;  
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak ?  
 There is not wind enough in the air  
 To move away the ringlet curl  
 From the lovely lady's cheek—

There is not wind enough to twirl  
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
 That dances as often as dance it can,  
 Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
 On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel !  
 Jesu, Maria, shield her well !  
 She folded her arms beneath her cloak,  
 And stole to the other side of the oak.  
 What sees she there ? "

(c) " Such a starved bank of moss  
 Till that May-morn,  
 Blue ran the flash across :  
 Violets were born !

Sky—what a scowl of cloud  
 Till, near and far,  
 Ray on ray split the shroud :  
 Splendid, a star ! "



- (d) " Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a-hunting  
For fear of little men ;  
Wee folk, good folk,  
Trooping all together ;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
And white owl's feather ! "
- (e) " Where the pools are bright and deep,  
Where the grey trout lies asleep,  
Up the river and over the lea,  
That's the way for Billy and me."
- (f) " Come as the winds come, when  
Forests are rended,  
Come as the waves come, when  
Navies are stranded :  
Faster come, faster come,  
Faster and faster,  
Chief, vassal, page and groom,  
Tenant and master."
- (g) " Not a word to each other : we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our  
place ;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit."
- (h) " Where the bee sucks, there suck I :  
In a cowslip's bell I lie :  
There I couch when owls do cry.  
On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily :  
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."
- (i) " I've heard bells chiming  
Full many a clime in,  
Tolling sublime in  
Cathedral shrine,

While at a glib rate  
 Brass tongues would vibrate—  
 But all their music  
     Spoke naught like thine ;  
 For memory, dwelling  
 On each proud swelling  
 Of the belfry knelling  
     Its bold notes free,  
 Made the bells of Shandon  
 Sound far more grand on  
 The pleasant waters  
     Of the river Lee.”

(j) “ With lifted feet, hands still,  
 I am poised, and down the hill  
 Dart, with heedful mind ;  
 The air goes by in a wind.

Swifter and yet more swift,  
 Till the heart with a mighty lift  
 Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry :  
 ‘ O bird, see ; see, bird, I fly.’ ”

(k) “ The days are sick and cold, and the skies are grey  
     and old,  
 And the twice-breathed airs blow damp ;  
 And I’d sell my tired soul for the bucking beam-sea roll  
     Of a black Bilbao tramp ;  
 With her load-line over her hatch, dear lass,  
 And a drunken Dago crew,  
 And her nose held down on the old trail, our own  
     trail, the out trail,  
 From Cadiz Bar on the Long Trail—the trail that is  
     always new.”

(l) “ There was mounting ’mong Graemes of the Netherby  
     clan ;  
 Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and  
     they ran ;  
 There was racing, and chasing, on Cannobie Lee,  
 But the lost bride of Netherby ne’er did they see.  
 So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,  
 Have ye e’er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar ? ”

You will find below the scansion of a few well-known nursery rhymes. Can you recognize them?

(a)     /  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  /  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  
          u  u  /  u  u  /  u  u  /

(b)     /  u  u  /  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  
          /  u  u  /  
          /  u  u  /  u  u  /

(c)     /  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  u  /

(d)     /  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  u  /

(e)     /  u  /  u  /  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  /  
          /  u  /  u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  /  u  u  /

(f)     /  u  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  /  u  u  u  /  
          u  /  u  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  u  /

(g)     /  u  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  u  /  
          /  u  u  u  /  u  
          /  u  u  u  /  
          /  u  u  u  /  u  
          u  /  u  u  u  /  
          /  u  u  u  /  u  u  u  /  u  u  u  /

(h)     /  /  u  /  u  /  
          /  u  /  u  u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  
          u  /  u  /  u  /  u  /

### *Blank Verse.*

Experience has shown that unrhymed verse is the most satisfactory measure both for continuous narrative and for dramatic poetry. In both these forms rhyme is apt to detach the mind from the greatness of the theme and to break the continuity of the verse.



There is a special reason for discarding it from the verse of drama which seeks to reproduce, as far as the laws of poetry allow, the language of ordinary human speech.

Most of our blank verse is in the form of iambic pentameters. In its early stages it was terribly monotonous, but the successive shapings it has had in the hands of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Milton have made it a thing of grace and might. An examination of early specimens will show that the movement of the sense followed closely and was co-terminous with the lines. Later these "end-stopped" lines gave place to "run-on" lines, the meaning flowing over from one line to another. The manner of this change is seen in the following passages, which should be carefully compared. You will no doubt recognize other devices which transformed blank verse from a rigid mechanical thing to a vivid flexible force.

"Beholde, my lorde, what monsters muster here,  
With Angels face and harmfule helish harts,  
With smyling lookes, and deep deceitful thoughts,  
With tender skinnes and stony cruel mindes,  
With stealing steppes, yet forward feete to fraude.  
Behold, behold, they never stande content,  
With God, with kinde, with any helpe of arte,  
But curle their locks with bodkins and with braids,  
But dye their heare with sundry subtill sleights,  
But paint and slicke till fayrest face be foule,  
But bumbast, bolster, frisle, and perfume :  
They marre with muske the balme which nature made,  
And dig for death in dellicatest dishes.  
The yonger sorte come pyping on apace,  
In whistles made of fine enticing wood,  
Till they have caught the birds for whom they birded.  
The elder sorte go stately stalking on,  
And on their backs they beare both land and fee,  
Castles and towres, revenewes and receits,  
Lordships and manours, fines, yea, fermes and al."

GEORGE GASCOIGNE, *d.* 1577.

“ She should have died hereafter ;  
 There would have been time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time ;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more : it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ In either hand the hastening Angel caught  
 Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate  
 Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast  
 To the subjected plain—then disappeared.  
 They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld  
 Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
 Waved over by that flaming brand ; the gate  
 With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.  
 Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them  
 soon ;  
 The world was all before them, where to choose  
 Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.  
 They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
 Through Eden took their solitary way.”

MILTON.

### *The Function of Metre.*

Why should poetry need metrical form ? Many answers could be given, but two only need concern us here. There can be no doubt that the arrangement of stresses we call metre gives pleasure, whether found in simple nursery rhyme or in elaborate ode. To what is that pleasure due ? There is a sense of finality, of completeness in an exquisitely finished poem, that is so satisfying to the universal love of beautiful form. Secondly, both rhythm and metre, whether in dance or in song or in verse, have from the earliest times had the threefold power of stimulating the emotions, of providing a pleasing mode of expression for them, and



of communicating these emotions to others. There is, moreover, some subtle relation between emotion and rhythmical language. We all know that an orator, after a halting opening, will, on warming up to his subject, delight us with the flowing grace of his sentences. Strong feeling seems to find in rhythmical expression a natural outlet. In prose, the natural medium of the intellectual processes, the stresses are subservient to the ever-varying position of the significant words. Thus the stresses of prose recur less regularly than those of verse. Shakespeare's practice is worth studying. His emotional passages are almost always metrical. When the emotion declines to a lower pitch, as in ordinary conversation or in argument, he uses prose. Brutus's reasoned appeal to the crowd at Cæsar's funeral is cold logic, for which prose is the fitting vehicle. Mark Antony's impassioned oration is in blank verse. But even the prose of Brutus's speech takes on metrical form when for a moment he loses his stoical reserve. It is here arranged as a passage of alternating hexameters and pentameters, the word "he" being inserted in the first line.

"Who is here so base that (he) would be a bondman?  
 If any, speak; for him have I offended.  
 Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?  
 If any, speak; for him have I offended.  
 Who is here so vile that will not love his country?  
 If any, speak; for him have I offended.  
 I pause for a reply."

After the reply of the crowd he completes the hexameter:

"Then none have I offended."

Any one who doubts the obligation that poetry owes to metre should try the experiment of transposing Antony's speech into prose. The theme will remain, but its power to move will have suffered an eclipse.



We have only room for a shorter experiment. Here are a few lines from *Paradise Lost* re-written as prose with as few alterations as possible :

“ The morning’s breath is sweet ; also her rising, with the charm of the earliest birds. The sun is pleasant when he first spreads on this delightful land his orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower, glistening with dew. The fertile earth is fragrant after the soft showers. The coming-on of grateful, mild evening is sweet.”

And this is Milton :

“ Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,  
With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the Sun,  
When first on this delightful land he spreads  
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,  
Glistening with dew ; fragrant the fertile Earth  
After soft showers ; and sweet the coming-on  
Of grateful Evening mild.”

The transposing of such a passage into prose is, as James Montgomery has finely said, “ like gathering up dewdrops, which appear jewels and pearls on the grass, but run into water in the hand ; the essence and the elements remain, but the grace, the sparkle, and the form are gone.”

Those who care to pursue this interesting question further will find in the following words of Mr. J. Middleton Murry a promising starting-point for speculation and self-analysis :

“ Rhythm and metre have the power of throwing the reader into a state of heightened susceptibility to emotional suggestion. Why they have this power would be a long, and perhaps mainly a physiological story. But the plain psychological fact is that the recurrence of a regular rhythmical beat has an almost hypnotic effect ; it completely detaches our attention from the world of everyday, lulls the practical alertness which that world demands, and if it is regular and monotonous enough,

actually sends us to sleep. That is the extreme effect of metre and rhythm. The poet's business is to take advantage of the tendency, and instead of letting it reach its logical physical conclusion, by an infinite rhythmical variation on the metrical basis, to keep us intensely aware. There is a background of metrical sameness separating us like a curtain from the practical world, there is a richness of the rhythmical variation to make the world in which we are worthy of our most delighted attention."

### *The Stanza.*

The charm of regular recurrence in poetry will be discussed in a later chapter. What concerns us here is that it is responsible for the stanza form. Whether simple or elaborate in structure, the stanza helps to bind the parts of a poem together into a single whole, so that the poem becomes a

" silver chain of sound  
Of many links, without a break."

The form of the stanza employed in any poem is, with rare exceptions, identical throughout, but as the moods of the poetic mind vary as the light of heaven, poets have invented a variety of stanza forms to satisfy the many requirements of their Muse. A few examples are given below, but it must be remembered that of every kind there is a rich assortment.

### *The Distich or Couplet.*

(a) " Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the  
ground,  
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon  
the hound.

Cross'd ! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the  
Moslem in his pride ;  
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in  
which he died."



- (b) " Hard he laboured, long and well :  
Over his work the boy's curls fell.

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew."

The *Tercet*, or, when all three lines rhyme, the *Triplet*.

- (a) " I made a posy while the day ran by ;  
Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie  
My life within this band.

But Time did beckon to the flowers, and they  
By noon most cunningly did steal away,  
And withered in my hand."

- (b) " Whenas in silk my Julia goes,  
Then, then (methinks) how sweetly flows  
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see  
That brave vibration each way free :  
O how that glittering taketh me ! "

The *Quatrain*, the most familiar of all stanzas.

- (a) " Stole a maiden from her place,  
Lightly to the warrior stept,  
Took the face-cloth from the face ;  
Yet she neither moved nor wept."

- (b) " He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene,  
But with his keener eye  
The axe's edge did try."

- (c) " For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest."



(d) "A slumber did my spirit seal ;  
I had no human fears :  
She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years."

(e) "How perfect was the calm ! it seemed no sleep ;  
No mood, which season takes away, or brings :  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things."

(The term Common Metre is applied to (d) which consists of alternate tetrameters and trimeters, rhyming *abab*. In (e) we have an example of the Elegiac Quatrain, four lines of iambic pentameters in alternate rhyme.)

### The Quintain.

(a) "The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight."

(b) "Go, lovely rose !  
Tell her, that wastes her time and me,  
That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee  
How sweet and fair she seems to be."

### The Sestet.

"What ! were ye born to be *a*  
An hour or half's delight, *b*  
And so to bid good-night ? *b*  
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth *c*  
Merely to show your worth, *c*  
And lose you quite." *a*

The *Rime Royal*, so called because it was used by King James I. of Scotland in his *King's Quair*. It was also

used by Chaucer for many of his *Canterbury Tales*, and is sometimes referred to as the *Chaucerian Stanza*. The rhymes are as follows : *ababbcc*.

“ O queenës lyvyng in prosperitee,  
 Duchesses, and ye ladyes everichone,  
 Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee !  
 An emperourës doghter stant allone ;  
 She hath no wight to whom to make hir mone.  
 O blood roial, that stondest in this drede,  
 Fer been thy freendes at thy gretë nede.”

### *Ottava Rima.*

“ 'Tis sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels,  
 By blood or ink ; 'tis sweet to put an end  
 To strife ; 'tis sometimes sweet to have our quarrels  
 Particularly with a tiresome friend :  
 Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels ;  
 Dear is the helpless creature we defend  
 Against the world : and dear the schoolboy spot  
 We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.”

*The Spenserian Stanza.* This consists of eight iambic pentameters concluding with a hexameter. The rhyming scheme is : *ababbcbcc*.

“ Who travels by the weary wandering way,  
 To come unto his wishèd home in haste,  
 And meets a flood that doth his passage stay,  
 Is not great grace to help him over past,  
 Or free his feet that in the mire stick fast ?  
 Most envious man, that grieves at neighbour's good,  
 And fond, that joyest in the woe thou hast !  
 Why wilt not let him pass, that long hath stood  
 Upon the bank, yet wilt thyself not pass the flood ? ”

### RHYME AND KINDRED DEVICES

“ Rhyme,” says a modern writer, “ is a silly ornament, a nuisance to the ear of a reader educated to

appreciate the essential qualities of poetry ;” and Milton, you remember, considered it “ no necessary Adjunct or true Ornament of Poem or good Verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous Age, to set off wretched matter and lame Meter ; grac’t indeed since by the use of some famous modern Poets, carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have exprest them.” Another writer praises rhyme “ because it is a discipline, and every discipline is at once a source of strength and of freedom.” Yet another hopes to kill it by turning it to ridiculous uses :

“ The wind’s bastinado  
Whipt in the calico  
Skin of the Macaroon  
And the black Picaroon  
Beneath the galloon  
Of the midnight sky.  
Came the great soldan  
In his sedan,  
Floating his fan—  
Saw what the sly  
Shadow’s cocoon  
In the barrocoo  
Held. Out they fly.  
‘ This melon,  
Sir Mammon,  
Comes out of Babylon ;  
Buy for a patacoon,  
Sir, you must buy.’ ”

Whatever the opponents of rhyme may say—and some of their objections are not unreasonable—you and I are not prepared to consign to oblivion the rhymed splendours of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton himself, and their illustrious aiders and abettors in rhyme. We must consider, therefore, the value of



rhyme to poetry. In the first place, there is no denying that it gives most people pleasure. It keeps the chime of verse going. It has the pleasing effect of recurring notes in music. Secondly, it helps to bind separate lines together into a greater unity. It may also be used to mark the end or close of a phrase, and, in certain forms, to serve as a stalking-horse for the comic muse.

The following kinds of rhyme are in common use :

1. Single syllables (Masculine Rhyme), *e.g.* time, crime.

2. Two syllables (Feminine or Double Rhyme), *e.g.* missed her, kissed her.

3. Three syllables (Triple Rhyme), *e.g.* beautiful, dutiful. It should be noticed that (*a*) the consonants preceding the rhyming syllables should differ, and (*b*) syllables are not in rhyme unless they are similarly accented. Thus the following pairs of words are not true rhymes :

Style, stile ;  
Imagine, divine ;  
Choice, noise.

Grotesque and humorous effects are often obtained by the use of triple rhyme. Butler's *Hudibras* has many examples, and there is Browning with :

“ His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,  
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.”

At times it produces a very different effect :

“ ‘Touch her not scornfully ;  
Think of her mournfully,  
Gently and humanly ;  
Not of the stains of her—  
All that remains of her  
Now is pure womanly.’ ”

Here the triple rhymes seem the natural vehicle for genuine feeling. The worst feature of rhyme is that it sometimes directs the thought of a poem. This occurs when a writer casts about for a rhyme and then adjusts the movement of his thought to fit it. Sometimes a poet takes an unholy pleasure in rhyme for its own sake. Browning disports himself as follows in *Pacchiarotto* :

“ The wolf, fox, bear, and monkey,  
By piping advice in one key—  
That his pipe should play a prelude  
To something heaven-tinged not hell-hued,  
Something not harsh but docile,  
Man-liquid, not man-fossil.”

It is an amusing pastime, and no doubt Browning himself regarded it as a species of pleasantry. Such rhyming is almost sure to lower the tone of serious poetry.

Pleasing effects are sometimes achieved by the use of Internal Rhymes. This is from Coleridge :

“ In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud  
It perched for vespers nine ;  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white moonshine.”

Tennyson gives us :

“ O hark, O hear ! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going !  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing ! ”

and Shelley :

“ As on the jag of a mountain crag  
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,  
An eagle alit one moment may sit  
In the light of its golden wings.”



You will notice that these internal rhymes occur at clearly marked places in the lines, and in every instance are strongly accented. A more subtle magic charms the trained ear when they are more ubiquitous and therefore less obvious. Swinburne was a master of this form of rhyme-craft.

“ England, queen of the waves, whose green inviolate  
girdle enrings thee round,  
Mother fair as the morning, where is now the place of  
thy foemen found ?  
Still the sea that salutes us free proclaims them  
stricken, acclaims thee crowned.”

Assonance is another form of recurrence like rhyme and alliteration. It is produced by repeating the same vowel sounds in syllables which differ in their final consonants, *e.g.* *gold*, *bowl*. Rhyme has a structural function ; assonance is chiefly used to add “ colour ” to verse. It occurs twice in the following line :

“ The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower.”

You will find examples in almost any poem of Swinburne. The sounds of *i* and *a* run like two delicate threads through the texture of *A Nympholept*, and give a definite character to the poem. Read the following lines aloud to appreciate the effect :

“ The skies may hold not the splendour of sundown fast ;  
It warms into twilight as dawn dies down into day ;  
And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,  
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately  
sway.”

The thought is almost unworthy of so fair a garment.

Alliteration is the recurrence at short intervals of the same initial consonant. It is one of the “ grace notes ” of poetry, but may mar the melody if used indiscriminately. Before the introduction of rhyme it



served to bind lines together. Its use now is chiefly ornamental. First let us see how objectionable it can be. Swinburne ends one of his stanzas thus :

“ Welling water’s winsome word,  
Wind in warm, wan, weather.”

This is neither as clever nor as funny as Browning’s perverse rhymes. To pass over Swinburne’s practice thus would not be fair. This also is Swinburne :

“ From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever Gods may be  
That no life lives for ever ;  
That dead men rise up never ;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds, somewhere, safe to sea.”

Like internal rhyme, Alliteration is usually most pleasing when it is deftly concealed. Alternating alliteration is seen in :

“ A mighty fountain momentarily was forced.”

The letter *l* is skilfully distributed in :

“ Dreamland lies forlorn of light.”

Still another form is seen in :

“ As *f*air as the *f*abulous *a*s*ph*odels.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION

"To sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into can be exhilarating to no creature."  
CARLYLE.

#### *Our "Likes" and "Dislikes."*

The cultivation of a sound literary taste is a normal process with those who read widely and carefully, and for most people all that is necessary is access to books and a love of reading. The process, however, is usually slow, and is often interrupted by intense but short-lived loyalties. To be deeply stirred by literature is itself a healthy symptom. Even the rapid transference of homage from one writer to another may be a proof of æsthetic development. Taste is the one aspect of literary study about which one is least entitled to dogmatize, partly because of this tendency to change, partly because one's own taste may be an individual thing ("I know what I like, and that's good enough for me," with the implication that it is therefore good enough for *you*), and partly because the unthinking acceptance of one person's standards of taste by another may lead to intellectual dishonesty and affectation.

What do we mean when we say that tastes differ? A comparison of the pictures, furniture, curtains, and objects of art you see in the various houses you visit and in your own homes is a sufficient proof that differences of taste exist. Unless your love of beautiful things is allowed to languish behind the shutters of



indifference, some of these objects will excite feelings of pleasure and admiration ; others may fill you with repugnance. In circumstances like this it is comforting to remember that your taste is at least active, though later experience may show that it was unsound. Above all, the fact that one's own taste is for a long time constantly changing its standards should warn us against cocksureness.

Is there, you may ask, no reliable guide in these matters ? Fortunately there is. Taste implies the co-existence of a standard of judgment. When we express our opinions on the merits of a landscape by Turner, a sonata of Beethoven, or an ode of Keats, we are relating these things to our private conception of what art or music or poetry of that kind should be. Now if we know that the standard of taste in these matters moves generally in one direction among those who either practise these arts or make a close and loving study of them, we may reasonably argue that we know the direction in which the ultimate standard must be sought. Further, if we find that certain works of art have survived several epochs of changing fashions and ideals, we may be reasonably sure that they have within them the qualities on which a sound taste may be formed. It would be absurd, at any rate, to accept our standards from those in whom these masterpieces evoke neither interest nor admiration. It would be equally absurd to accept our standards from the majority.

A great work of art is the result of much labour directed by a mind of surpassing vitality and insight. To appreciate such a work requires, surely, some knowledge of what the artist has put into it, and it is to those who take the pains to acquire this knowledge that we should turn for guidance. So many people are ready to condemn or, at least, ignore works they have failed to understand, and to award the palm to works which flatter their intelligence. Being a numer-



ous host, they are full of confidence : beware of them. It is for their sakes that libraries are too often starved of the best literature. To dip into the pages of a few of the best sellers is sufficient to prove how perverted the general taste may become. Their gods are enshrined in the picture palaces, and by their gods ye shall know them. On the day that thousands of frantic worshippers fought to catch a glimpse of Jackie Coogan at a London railway terminus there landed in a southern harbour, without a word of welcome, a great-hearted English adventurer who had circumnavigated the globe in a boat that even the great Sir Francis himself would have feared to venture afar in. The fact that Englishmen in distant ports along his route eagerly awaited his arrival only accentuates the decadent spirit of their home-keeping brethren. A nation enjoying normal social and spiritual health does not behave in this fashion, and if we find that the weakening of moral fibre is accompanied by a taste for a certain type of literature and amusement we may conclude that a change of taste is desirable. No nation can go on loving the mean and remain great. Again and again a nation has been saved by a few great men, men who forgave the indifference of the multitude so long as there remained even a small minority of disciples prepared by patient endeavour to help a perverse generation to appreciate the truth. "The poet," says Professor Raleigh, "seems to be soliloquizing because he is addressing himself, with the most entire confidence, to a small company of his friends ; . . . they are taken by him for his equals ; he expects from them a quick intelligence and a perfect sympathy, which may enable him to despise all concealment. . . . He neither explains, nor falters, nor repents ; he introduces his work with no preface, and cumbers it with no notes. He will not lower nor raise his voice for the sake of the profane and idle who may chance to stumble across his entertainment. His living audi-

tors, unsolicited for the tribute of worship or an alms, find themselves conceived of in the likeness of what he would have them to be, raised to a companion pinnacle of friendship, and constituted peers and judges, if they will, of his achievement. Sometimes they come late."

### Words.

There is nothing the man of science or the philosopher distrusts so much as words. Whenever he can he uses symbols or figures which have an unalterable meaning. Words are elusive things. You can never tell what new and unforeseen significance they may acquire. Certainly, words derived or manufactured from dead languages are less troublesome. That explains their presence in such large numbers in the vocabulary of science and philosophy. But even here you are never sure. Without the least warning a word which has been apparently fossilized for centuries will sometimes show disconcerting signs of life. To the philosopher *le mot propre* is illusory. What he wants is *le mot immuable*, but he is asking for the moon. At times the process of change is so slow as to be imperceptible and without effect in a single generation of men. At other times a word is transformed in the course of a few heart-beats. Just so rapidly did the word "honourable" pass from positive certainty to doubt, and from doubt to a flatly contradictory significance in the minds of Mark Antony's audience during the opening sentences of his funeral oration. It was this transformation of a word, surely, that hastened the departure of those adherents to Brutus and Cassius who had remained to hear the speech—a point that is generally not made on the stage. Take a more familiar example still. The word "home" is defined in the dictionary as "one's usual place of abode." But when you think or speak of your own home note how its meaning instantly widens. What a multiplicity of



scenes and experiences, some joyous, and some, maybe, sorrowful, are implied in that one short word.

Try as he will to pin the meaning of a word down, the dictionary-maker is for ever baffled. "Every generation," says Professor Charlton, "using a word, distils into it those of its own experiences which hinge on the idea at the back of the word. The word 'enthusiast' meant to the eighteenth century a person with reprehensible passions and no sense of the decencies of life; their experience of enthusiasm was of its unpleasant power to disturb the right-minded placidity of normal life. To the nineteenth century enthusiasm meant a desirable and valuable quality; because the nineteenth century had experienced the value of the disturbances caused by enthusiasts like Wesley, Paine, and Shelley, whereas their predecessors knew only the discomfort of such disturbances."

Now whereas the philosopher would have, if he could, a system of one word one meaning, the poet revels in the vitality and the Protean mutability of words. He is never tired of their capriciousness. As words are but symbols of thoughts, the more numerous their implications the richer the poet's vocabulary becomes. An almost unbridgeable gap lies between the meaning of the word "whelp" as Goldsmith uses it:

" And in that town a dog was found,  
As many dogs there be,  
Both mongrel, puppy, *whelp*, and hound,  
And curs of low degree"—

and the meaning Shakespeare discovered in it:

" Go, my dread lord, to your great grandsire's tomb  
From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,  
And your great uncle's, Edward the Black Prince,  
Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,  
Making defeat on the full power of France;  
Whiles his most mighty father on a hill  
Stood smiling to behold his lion's *whelp*  
Forage in blood of French nobility."



What of the shades of meaning that must lie between?

You will remember how poets brought up in the classical tradition tried to "put words in their places" and keep them there, decreeing that this word was to be reserved for poetry and that one "detailed" for prosaic duty with no chance of promotion. The consequence was not without its irony, for the prose of the classical age is generally admitted to be superior to its most characteristic poetry. "The serenity of the classic ideal," says Professor Raleigh, "is the serenity of paralysis and death. A universal agreement in the use of words facilitates communication, but, so inextricably is expression entangled with feeling, it leaves nothing to communicate. . . . This is the error of the classical creed, to imagine that in a fleeting world, where the quickest eye can never see the same thing twice, and a deed done can never be repeated, language alone should be capable of fixity and finality. . . . Words must change to live, and a word once fixed becomes useless for the power of art."

Milton, to whom words were as pigments are to a painter, could be trusted to tax the meaning of a word to the uttermost, and, when he could, levied a double impost. When such instances occur he gives us a line packed with meaning. The betrayed Samson's description of his wife is a good example:

"That *specious* monster, my *accomplished* snare."

Milton's practice suggests that "specious" means not only "deceitful" but also "beautiful," its original meaning. Similarly, "accomplished" informs us not only that his wife was skilful, but also that she had succeeded in her wicked design. Milton, certainly, would have held no brief for the "fixed" word.

To entrust definite thoughts to the keeping of vague words is as foolish as leaving an Iago in charge of a

Verges. The thoughts will have flown before cock-crow. But life is full of dimly-lit byways of thought and feeling wherein flit ideas which are ready to dart into still greater obscurity at the approach of the cock-sure assertive word. It is only to vague diffident words that such ideas will make their shy advances. Only too frequently our fancies "break through language and escape." What would be gained, think you, from translating an inspired passage of Wordsworth's into "explicit hard words which, like tiresome explanatory persons, say all that they mean"? This for instance:

" And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."

Would the epic characters of *Paradise Lost* have gained or lost in sublimity if Milton had given us exact information as to their dimensions, shapes, features, and the like? I think not; but what a diverse assortment of sketches you would make if half a dozen of you were to draw the phantom figure of Death from Milton's description?

" The other Shape—  
*If shape it might be called that shape had none*  
*Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb ;*  
*Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,*  
*For each seemed either—black it stood as Night,*  
*Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,*  
*And shook a dreadful dart : what seemed his head*  
*The likeness of a kingly crown had on.*  
*Satan was now at hand, and from his seat*  
*The monster moving onward came as fast*  
*With horrid strides ; Hell trembled as he strode."*



Shakespeare, too, knows the value of vagueness :

*Desdemona.* Am I that name, Iago ?

*Iago.* What name, fair lady ?

*Desdemona.* Such as she says my lord did say I was.

Explicit statement does not exist that could express such pathos and such delicacy.

## REPETITION AND VARIETY

The regular succession of day and night, summer and winter, tidal ebb and flow, the systole and diastole of the heart, the alternation of right foot with left in walking—these and a host of other circumstances bear witness to the rhythmic laws which condition our existence. Watch a great bowler on the cricket field or an efficient crew in a boat race : you will see that a certain sequence of movements is regularly followed. Both in bowling and in rowing experience has shown that rhythmical movement is more effective than brute force. From the beginning rhythm was the essence of dancing, and its application to poetry naturally followed.

Every man is at times a rebel against authority, and recognizing that certain laws are immutable tries to escape from such laws as offer the slightest chance of success to his temerity. King Canute's challenge to the tides, if it ever happened, was sheer fatuity, but in other matters more subject to his will, especially those which his fellow-men have ordained, man is at liberty to gratify his love of change. Poetry illustrates as well as anything his acceptance of regular recurrence as a normal condition of life, and his occasional outbreaks therefrom. Do not imagine that he has accepted the principle of regular recurrence with any feeling of settled displeasure. As a normal condition of things he welcomes it ; it enhances his



pleasure in change, and at the same time offers a way of retreat when adventure has lost its spice.

The love of regular recurrence in poetry is expressed in many ways—metre, head-rhyme, end-rhyme, assonance, repetition of word and phrase, parallelism, refrain, stanza form, and so on. Love of change is responsible for such devices as contrast, inversion, subtly disguised alliteration, irregular rhymes, experiments in stanza form, uneven distribution of stresses, and free verse. In the following passages you will find examples of recurrence. It is not enough to recognize their character; you should try to discover what poetry has gained from their use.

(a) "O Christ, who holds the open gate,  
O Christ, who drives the furrow straight,  
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter  
Of holy white birds flying after,  
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,  
And thou wilt bring the young green corn,  
The young green corn divinely springing,  
The young green corn for ever singing;  
And when the field is fresh and fair,  
The blessed feet shall glitter there,  
And we will walk the weeded field,  
And tell the golden harvest's yield,  
The corn that makes the holy bread  
By which the soul of man is fed,  
The holy bread, the food unpriced,  
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ."

(b) "The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, A  
The furrow followed free;  
We were the first that ever burst x  
Into that silent sea."

(c) "And as the light of Heaven varies, now  
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night  
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint  
To make her beauty vary day by day,  
In crimsons and in purples and in gems."

(d) " Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine,

and doeth them,  
shall be likened unto a Wise Man,  
which built his house upon the Rock :  
And the rain descended,  
and the floods came,  
and the winds blew,  
and beat upon that house ;  
and it fell not ;  
for it was founded upon the Rock.

And every one that heareth these words of mine,  
and doeth them not,  
shall be likened unto a Foolish Man,  
which built his house upon the Sand :  
And the rain descended,  
and the floods came,  
and the winds blew,  
and smote upon that house ;  
and it fell ;  
and great was the fall thereof ! "

(e) " A little grave,  
A little, little grave."

(f) " Yellow with bird-foot trefoil are the grass glades ;  
Yellow with cinque-foil of the dew-grey leaf ;  
Yellow with stone-crop ; the moss-mounds are  
yellow ;  
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the  
sheaf ;  
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing  
yaffle."

(g) " Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful  
skies,  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes."

(h) " Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,  
With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the Sun,  
When first on this delightful land he spreads  
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,



Glistering with dew ; fragrant the fertile Earth  
 After soft showers ; and sweet the coming-on  
 Of grateful Evening mild ; then silent Night,  
 With this her solemn bird, and this fair Moon,  
 And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train :  
 But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends  
 With charm of earliest birds ; nor rising Sun  
 On this delightful land ; nor herb, fruit, flower,  
 Glistering with dew ; nor fragrance after showers,  
 Nor grateful Evening mild ; nor silent Night,  
 With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,  
 Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet."

- (2) "'Tis but a week since down the glen  
 The trampling horses came—  
 Half a hundred fighting men  
 With all their spears aflame !  
 They laughed and clattered as they went,  
 And round about their way  
 The blackbirds sang with one consent  
 In the green leaves of May.

Never again shall I see them pass ;  
 They'll come victorious never ;  
 Their spears are withered all as grass,  
 Their laughter's laid for ever ;  
 And where they clattered as they went,  
 And where their hearts were gay,  
 The blackbirds sing with one consent  
 In the green leaves of May."

- (3) " I saw the leaf burners  
 brushing the leaves  
 With their long brooms  
 into the blaze.  
 Above them the sky  
 scurried along  
 Pale as a plate,  
 And peered thro' the oaks,  
 While the hurrying wind  
 harried the hedge.  
 But fast as they swept  
 feeding the leaves

Into the flame  
 that flickered and fumed,  
 The wind, the tree-shaker,  
 shaking the boughs,  
 Whirled others down  
 withered and wan."

The value of contrast is recognized by all artists. In music the *adagio* is followed by the *scherzo*; in painting the bright sunlit courtyard is seen through a dark and frowning gateway; in architecture slender shafts are clustered round the massive pillar; in poetry the beautiful is enhanced by the proximity of the grotesque. In an earlier chapter we considered the importance of variety in rhythm. It was urged there that such changes should not be so frequent as to render the normal movement unrecognizable. In other words, variety must be subservient to uniformity. The same is true of poetry in general, and, in fact, of all the arts. Contrast is one of the most daring devices of style, and unless it is used with both skill and discretion, the result is apt to be disastrous. The most serious effect may be the loss of unity which is essential to any work of art. When in a painting a general effect of gloom is desired, the light should be so disposed as to emphasize this gloom, and not to minimize it. There is a picture (you know it well) of Napoleon, a prisoner on board the British warship *Bellerophon*. He stands alone and in the foreground with a bare space of deck about him—a moving picture of fallen greatness. Some distance away stand his officers, companions in captivity. Whereas Napoleon wears a hat and a cloak, these garments have been doffed by his suite. Napoleon's thoughts are elsewhere. Theirs are all for him, so that if for a moment your attention wanders from the main theme of the picture (position, dress and attitude leave you in no doubt on that score), their eyes are so directed as to lead you back to Napoleon. There is, however, one figure with his back



turned to the tragic figure in the foreground. It is that of a boy, the son of one of the French officers. The tragedy has no real meaning for him, and he finds more interest in watching the working of the ship. The very fact that, boy-like, he is unmoved by a situation of such profound significance adds an additional note of pathos to the scene.

The same deft use of contrast is observable in poetry. Masefield's antique ship hailing from fabled Ophir,

"Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,"

and his stately Spanish galleon,

"Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,"

are wondrous forms of beauty, but not so beautiful as they become when you think of the

"Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,  
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days."

A similar effect in another sphere is obtained by J. C. Squire in *Rivers* :

"Rotting scrofulous steaming trunks,  
Great horned emerald beetles crawling,  
Ants and huge slow butterflies  
That had strayed and lost the sun ;  
Ah, sick have I swooned as the air thickened  
To a pallid brown ecliptic glow,  
And on the forest, fallen with languor,  
Thunder has begun.

And then in the forests of the Amazon,  
When the rain has ended, and silence come,  
What dark luxuriance unfolds

From behind the night's drawn bars.  
The wreathing odours of a thousand trees  
And the flowers' faint gleaming presences,  
And over the clearings and the still waters  
Soft indigo and hanging stars."

If you read the following passage aloud you will find your tongue lingering over each word for two and a half lines : from that point you will have to restrain your speech unless it is to degenerate into a gabble.

“ By the margin, willow-veil'd,  
Slide the heavy barges trail'd  
By slow horses ; and unhail'd  
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd  
Skimming down to Camelot.”

Memories of our early religious teaching die hard ; we still think of angels as a race peopling some mysterious “ reserve ” beyond the cosmic systems. It needs the poet to make all plain. He shatters our misconceptions by the use of a few pointed contrasts.

“ Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
The eagle plunge to find the air ? ”

he asks ; and then comes the revelation :

“ Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars !—  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places ;—  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing !  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
That miss the many-splendoured thing.”

Note the beautiful effect of contrast in the closing stanza of Julian Grenfell's *Into Battle* :

“ The thundering line of battle stands,  
And on the air Death moans and sings,  
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,  
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.”

The artist in Coleridge makes splendid use of the device in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* :



" I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away ;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor reek did they :  
The look with which they looked on me  
Has never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell  
A spirit from on high ;  
But oh ! more horrible than that  
Is a curse in a dead man's eye !  
Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse  
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And nowhere did abide :  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside."

Tennyson is equally skilful :

" His own thought drove him as a goad.  
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
The bare cliff clang'd round him, as he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon."

In passing, note " to left and right " as a variant on the more familiar " to right and left." Milton likewise gives us " beyond the bounds of place and time," the usual order being, of course, " time and place." The usual effect of an inversion like this is to compel us by its strangeness to notice what we are apt to pass over heedlessly in its more familiar form.

Variations in rhythm have been dealt with from the technical standpoint in the Chapter on Metre. These

variations have also an æsthetic value, providing the musical accompaniment to endless gradations in thought and feeling. Could rhythmic change be more aptly managed than this ?

“ When men were all asleep the snow came flying,  
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,  
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,  
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town.”

More striking, but not more beautiful, is the sudden change of rhythm that transforms the mood of the second of these two stanzas from Dryden :

“ The soft complaining flute  
In dying notes discovers  
The woes of hapless lovers,  
Whose dirge is whispered by the warbling lute,

Sharp violins proclaim  
Their jealous pangs and desperation,  
Fury, frantic indignation,  
Depth of pains, and height of passion,  
For the fair, disdainful dame.”

A still older poet (unknown) gives us this :

“ Sleep is a reconciling,  
A rest that peace begets :—  
Doth not the sun rise smiling,  
When fair at eve he sets ?  
—Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes !  
Melt not in weeping !  
While She lies sleeping  
Softly, now softly lies,  
Sleeping !”

There is a touch of real genius in that last monometer, a fitting close to the persuasive lullaby that precedes it. One is reminded of that other concluding monometer in Henley's *Margaritæ Sorori*. This poem is



one of the earliest experiments in free verse, and, one may add, one of the most successful. The variations of rhythm are under perfect control, but no less beautiful on that account.

“ A late lark twitters from the quiet skies ;  
And from the west,  
Where the sun, his day's work ended,  
Lingers as in content,  
There falls on the old grey city  
An influence luminous and serene,  
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends  
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires  
Shine, and are changed. In the valley  
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,  
Closing his benediction,  
Sinks, and the darkening air  
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night--  
Night with her train of stars  
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing !  
My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,  
The sundown splendid and serene,  
Death.”

### UNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the first things we ask of any work of art is that it should be dominated by some single theme. In a picture, for instance, whatever wealth of detail may appear, the eye should be steadily recalled to the object or motive which gives the picture its special significance. A picture which gives the eye a choice of several themes of equal interest to observe is not one

picture, but several pictures in one, and no one can be expected to observe profitably or adequately several pictures at the same time, even if they are all contained within one frame. We insist on one dominant theme then. But this does not mean that there should be only one. A secondary theme may by its similarity corroborate the primary theme ; there may even be a third which brings the powerful support of contrast. Let us see how this works in the field of literature. Most of you must have read Shakespeare's tragic history of the house of Lear. This history provides the central idea of the play. Having decided on his theme, Shakespeare cast about for another theme of a similar nature, and chanced upon a story dating from an entirely different period. This was the Gloucester story.

Now notice the dramatic purpose it is made to serve. We learn in the opening scene that the King has settled his kingdom on two of his daughters, who, through their wickedness and treachery, drive their father to madness and death : his third daughter, who remains faithful to the end, he has disinherited. In the same way Gloucester disinherits his faithful son Edgar and makes the perfidious Edmund his heir. As the tragedy proceeds, the Gloucester story emphasizes point by point the inevitable consequences of Lear's unjust distribution. There are points of contrast too. The self-sacrifice of Cordelia, who has received nothing but injustice from her father, is set off by the calculating selfishness of Edmund, whom Gloucester has treated so generously. " Thus as the main and under plot go on working side by side," says Professor Moulton, " they are at every turn by their antithesis throwing up one another's effect ; the contrast is like the reversing of the original subject in a musical fugue." In the same play, when the aged King's reason is trembling in the balance, his only attendants are a professional fool and a man who, for purposes of his own, has laid aside



all semblances of sanity. The very elements are "out of temper." The congregation of these varying and contrasted forms of madness has the effect of some dire commotion in the moral world, and produces one of the most powerful scenes in the whole range of tragedy. Now the important thing is this. However often and however far we are temporarily led away from the spectacle of Lear's disastrous career, we are brought back to it with a persistency that seems inexorable. With every digression a full circle round is fetched.

The same principle of unity, without its complexity, is evident in shorter works like the lyric or the sonnet. One thought or feeling dominates the whole and gives to each of the parts its justification and significance. The same principle that "draws a picture together," as artists say, concentrates the power of a Shakespearean sonnet. Notice how the various ingredients of this sonnet, for instance, coalesce and lose their separate characteristics in the consummating thought of line 12 :

"When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced  
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age ;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage :  
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the watery main,  
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store ;  
When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay,  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat—  
That Time will come and take my Love away :  
—This thought is as a death, which cannot choose  
But weep to have that which it fears to lose."

There is beauty in every part, and a further beauty in the sum of all the parts. Natural processes and human feeling exist in perfect fusion to one end.

Wordsworth's problem in *The Solitary Reaper* was

not unsimilar. The burden of his poem is the mysterious quality of the girl's song. Now watch the poet at work. First of all we are to be "keyed up" to a receptive mood. A brief statement of the occasion is followed, therefore, by an appeal to the imagination :

"O listen ! for the vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound."

Having enticed us away from the region of prosaic fact, he leads our imaginations in world-wide sweeps in search of experiences which may parallel so rare a phenomenon. (No familiar experience would be adequate.) But the girl's voice is matchless in its appeal, and our quest is from the first doomed to failure. So is the wonder increased. We have not returned empty-handed, however :

"No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands.

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides."

We are next involved in a series of surmises which leaves us more mystified than before. The plaintiveness of the song is infectious. It is audible in the poet's voice as he draws us into the inquiry :

"Will no one tell me what she sings ?  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago :  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day ?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again ?"



The incident closes with the mystery still unsolved, but we are richer by one more of those emotional experiences which bring "sensations sweet" in hours of weariness. Hebridean seas, Arabian deserts, and a Scottish peasant girl! What a diversity of themes! Yet they fall naturally into their places as essential parts of a design.

In *To a Mountain Daisy* Burns uses the fate of that humble flower as a symbol of the uncertainty of human life, "with special reference to" himself. The development of the theme is simple but interesting. For your convenience I will reproduce the poem.

"Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,  
 Thou's met me in an evil hour;  
 For I maun crush amang the stoure  
                                   Thy slender stem:  
 To spare thee now is past my pow'r,  
                                   Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no' thy neibor sweet,  
 The bonnie lark, companion meet,  
 Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,  
                                   Wi' spreckl'd breast!  
 When upward-springing, blythe, to greet  
                                   The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north  
 Upon thy early, humble birth;  
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
                                   Amid the storm,  
 Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth  
                                   Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,  
 High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;  
 But thou, beneath the random bield  
                                   O' clod or stane,  
 Adorns the histie stibble field,  
                                   Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,  
 Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,  
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
   In humble guise ;  
 But now the share uptears thy bed,  
   And low thou lies !

Such is the fate of simple bard,  
 On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd !  
 Unskilful he to note the card  
   Of prudent lore,  
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,  
   And overwhelm him o'er !

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,  
 Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,  
 By human pride or cunning driv'n  
   To mis'ry's brink ;  
 Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,  
   He, ruin'd, sink !

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,  
 That fate is thine—no distant date ;  
 Stern Ruin's plough-share drives elate,  
   Full on thy bloom,  
 Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,  
   Shall be thy doom."

The poet's sympathy with the daisy is aroused in Stanza 1 as he contemplates its inevitable fate. Our own imaginative sympathy is stimulated by the pathetic allusion to the almost human love that normally surrounds it (Stanza 2). This sympathy is increased by the picture of the daisy's humble origin, cheerfulness, and modesty (Stanza 3). Is there an autobiographical note in the first two lines of this stanza ? The process is carried a stage farther when he contrasts the pride of the pampered garden flowers with the hard life and unassuming character of the daisy (Stanzas 4 and 5). The end of Stanza 5 sees the act of destruction. By a natural transition we learn



in the next two stanzas that we have been listening to a parable; in the fate of the daisy we see symbolized the fate of humble poets in general. In the last stanza the parable is applied to the poet himself. Note that the transition from the parable to its application to human affairs is accompanied by a change of diction. Dialect disappears. Why?

The fusion of the two elements—Nature and Humanity—seems here so artless and natural that it is surprising how few poems of this kind carry conviction. Wordsworth had the gift, and so had Herrick. You will remember the latter's injunction *To the Virgins*, to make much of Time :

“Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying :  
And this same flower that smiles to-day,  
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting :  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best, which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer ;  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time ;  
And while ye may, go marry :  
For having once but lost your prime,  
You may for ever tarry.”

He returns to the text in *To Daffodils*. One wonders if he was like this in his sermons :

“Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon :  
As yet the early rising Sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.

Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the even-song ;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a Spring ;  
As quick a growth to meet decay  
As you, or anything.  
We die,  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away  
Like to the Summer's rain ;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew  
Ne'er to be found again."

You will admit, I think, that in all these examples, in spite of apparent digressions from the dominant *motif*, there is a pervading unity of tone or spirit. Can we say the same of the following poem ?

Life ! I know not what thou art,  
But know that thou and I must part ;  
And when, or how, or where we met,  
I own to me's a secret yet.  
But this I know, when thou art fled,  
Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,  
No clod so valueless shall be  
As all that then remains of me.

O whither, whither dost thou fly,  
Where bend unseen thy trackless course,  
And in this strange divorce,  
Ah, tell where I must seek this compound I ?  
To the vast ocean of empyreal flame,  
From whence thy essence came,  
Dost thou thy flight pursue, when freed  
From matter's base encumbering weed ?  
Or dost thou, hid from sight,  
Wait, like some spell-bound knight,



Through blank oblivious years th' appointed hour,  
 To break thy trance and reassume thy power ?  
 Yet canst thou without thought or feeling be ?  
 O say what art thou, when no more thou'rt thee ?

Life ! we've been long together,  
 Through pleasant and through cloudy weather ;  
 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear ;  
 Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear ;  
 Then steal away, give little warning,  
     Choose thine own time ;  
 Say not Good-night, but in some brighter clime  
     Bid me Good-morning."

Take away the second verse and you have a complete little poem. The thought is simple like that of many of our most beautiful lyrics, yet it has the charm of novelty :

" What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

The second verse, with its vague conundrums and artificial diction, is at odds with the simplicity and sincerity of the rest. Again, no one will dispute Palgrave's taste in omitting the last verse of the lovely song from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* :

" Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
     Nor the furious winter's rages ;  
 Thou thy worldly work hast done,  
     Home art gone and ta'en thy wages :  
 Golden lads and girls all must,  
 As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great ;  
     Thou art past the tyrant's stroke ;  
 Care no more to clothe and eat ;  
     To thee the reed is as the oak :  
 The sceptre, learning, physic, must  
 All follow this and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,  
 Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone ;  
 Fear nor slander, censure rash ;  
 Thou hast finish'd joy and moan :  
 All lovers young, all lovers must  
 Consign to thee and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee !  
 Nor no witchcraft charm thee !  
 Ghost unlaid forbear thee !  
 Nothing ill come near thee !  
 Quiet consummation have ;  
 And renowned be thy grave ! ”

In the play the song is a duet sung on a special occasion, and on dramatic grounds there is something to be said for the retention of the last verse. But treated as a lyric, away from its context, the poem gains enormously if this verse is omitted.

Occasionally, by a stroke of either genius or good fortune, a poet will combine two poems, each complete in itself, in such a way as to produce a third with a unity all its own. In Allan Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany* there appears the following poem under the title of *Rare Willie drowned in Yarrow*.

“ Willie's rare, and Willie's fair,  
 And Willie's wondrous bonny ;  
 And Willie hecht to marry me  
 Gin e'er he married ony.

Yestreen I made my bed fu' braid,  
 The night I'll mak' it narrow,  
 For a' the live-lang winter night  
 I lie twined o' my marrow.

O came ye by yon water-side ?  
 Pou'd you the rose or lily ?  
 Or came you by yon meadow green,  
 Or saw you my sweet Willie ?



She sought him up, she sought him down,  
She sought him braid and narrow ;  
Syne, in the cleaving of a craig,  
She found him drown'd in Yarrow ! ”

Peter Buchan's *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland* contains a ballad called *The Haughs of Yarrow*. The first six stanzas run thus :

“ Down in yon garden sweet and gay  
Where bonny grows the lily,  
I heard a fair maid sighing say,  
‘ My wish be wi’ sweet Willie !

‘ O gentle wind, that bloweth south  
From where my Love repaireth,  
Convey a kiss frae his dear mouth  
And tell me how he faireth !

‘ O tell sweet Willie to come doun  
And hear the mavis singing,  
And see the birds on ilka bush  
And leaves around them hinging.

‘ The lav’rock there, wi’ her white breast  
And gentle throat sae narrow ;  
There’s sport eneuch for gentlemen  
On Leader haughs and Yarrow.

‘ O Leader haughs are wide and braid  
And Yarrow haughs are bonny ;  
There Willie hecht to marry me  
If e’er he married ony.

‘ But Willie’s gone, whom I thought on,  
And does not hear me weeping ;  
Draws many a tear frae ’s true love’s e’e  
When other maids are sleeping.’ ”

It is quite possible that one of these poems was inspired by the other. They are, however, separate poems, and were probably composed at different

periods. Try your own 'prentice hand in dovetailing the two poems together, and then turn to No. 128 in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* to see how it was done by an anonymous poet of the eighteenth century. (Palgrave's title for the poem is *Willy drowned in Yarrow*.) So you see how two strains

" according well  
May make one music as before,"

or, to vary Browning's phrase, how out of two sounds the poet may frame, not a third sound, but a star.

### *Background.*

There are certain poems which achieve their purpose without demanding from the reader any knowledge of the circumstances amid which they were written. This is sometimes true even when the poems were inspired by outstanding historical events. *The Battle of Blenheim*, *The Burial of Sir John Moore*, *Hohenlinden*, to mention three familiar examples, depend for their appeal solely on their contents. The historical facts of the wars, the respective belligerents, even the periods of history which they illumine, may be entirely ignored. Other poems fall far short of their aim when detached from their background. Such a poem is Kipling's *Recessional*. To those who were alive at the time these lines appeared they had the effect of a cold douche after a night of feverish excesses. "At the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria," says Professor Walker, "the English nation grew 'drunk with sight of power.' There were miles of warships gathered at Spithead; feudatory princes from India and representatives of free peoples ruling over territories such as had never before owned allegiance to a single flag were assembled to do homage to the aged sovereign. . . . Suddenly, upon ears still ringing with



the blare of trumpets and hearts still elate with the proofs of material power, there fell the voice which proclaimed the insufficiency and the evanescence of all such power :

‘ Far called, our navies melt away ;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire :  
Lo ! all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre ! ’ ”

Read the poem again with this in mind and it will take on a deeper significance. There was reason enough for pride in England’s greatness, but if you could turn up the files of the daily papers of the time and read the “frantic boast and foolish word” with which the press celebrated the event, you would be in a still better position to understand why even an ardent imperialist like Kipling felt that patriotism was a word “too oft profaned.”

The favourite background for English poetry, especially in modern times, is Nature. Whether a poem is narrative, lyrical, or reflective—there is little dramatic verse written these days—Nature provides more or less the setting. Of some poems it is the very *raison d’être*, the poet having no other aim than to reproduce in fitting words scenes of exquisite beauty or impressive grandeur. More often the poet sees in Nature a conscious purpose. According to his mood it may be malevolent, “red in tooth and claw”—every creature living in dread of the stronger and preying on the weaker, even great cities living in constant fear of annihilation—or it may be merely indifferent :

“ Race after race, man after man,  
Have thought that my secret was theirs,  
Have dream’d that I lived but for them,  
That they were my glory and joy.  
They are dust, they are changed, they are gone !  
I remain.”

Another poet found

“no hint throughout the Universe  
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse.”

The same detachment is babbled by Tennyson's brook :

“For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.”

At other times Nature seems to owe allegiance to the same power that controls the destiny of man and is responsive to the same dread summons. The storm that rages in the mind of Lear is paralleled by the unhinged welkin beneath which he raves. When Adam fell,

“Earth trembled from her entrails, as again  
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan ;  
Sky lower'd, and muttering thunder, some sad drops  
Wept at completing of the mortal sin  
Original.”

It is the fear of this communion of man and Nature that makes even Casca serious.

“Are you not moved, when all the sway of earth  
Shakes like a thing unfirm ? O Cicero,  
I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds  
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen  
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,  
To be exalted with the threatening clouds :  
But never till to-night, never till now,  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.  
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction.”

This question of background may be viewed from another angle. Among the early masterpieces at the National Gallery there are a few which, whatever other merits they possess, are admittedly faulty as regards both perspective and draughtsmanship. It is natural



to ask whether, in determining the artistic value of these works, allowances have been made for the limitations from which their authors suffered. Should the fact that the principles of foreshortening and perspective were unknown or but dimly realized, and the importance of anatomical study undreamed of by early artists, be taken into consideration, or should a work of any period stand or fall by its intrinsic merits as a work of art? The inquiry is equally pertinent to music, poetry, and in fact to all the arts. To make such allowances would seem to be within the limits of ordinary fairness. Would Titian be accounted so great had there been no Giotto? or Beethoven if Haydn had made bricks instead of symphonies? Well, there is no proof that Titian and Beethoven would not; there is much to suggest that they might. Genius in all ages has laughed at limitations. They seem to have had no terrors for Homer, for Virgil, Horace, Dante, Chaucer, or Shakespeare. In his own craft Horace is still supreme; in the drama the greatest achievements of our time are fustian compared with the bright texture of Shakespeare's workmanship, and we have no thought of "making allowances" when we catch our breath before a portrait by Velasquez or stand in hushed wonderment in the nave of a mediæval cathedral. These things abide no man's question; they stand in need of no man's favour. The artists who made them have set up standards that are absolute, not relative. They furnish authentic precedents to those judges of art who turn too ready an ear to the plea of "extenuating circumstances."

I can hear your objecting, "Come, come, the matter does not end there." You are quite right. What I have said is not to be taken as an *ex cathedra* judgment. It is intended to be merely provocative. There is matter here for an interesting discussion on "The Nature of Genius" or an essay on "What is Great Poetry?"

## EXERCISES

1. Describe in detail the design of the following poem :

✓ Of Man's Mortality

Like as the damask rose you see,  
Or like the blossom on the tree,  
Or like the dainty flower of May,  
Or like the morning to the day,  
Or like the sun, or like the shade,  
Or like the gourd which Jonas had,  
E'en such is man ;—whose thread is spun,  
Drawn out, and cut, and so is done.—  
The rose withers, the blossom blasteth,  
The flower fades, the morning hasteth,  
The sun sets, the shadow flies,  
The gourd consumes—and man he dies !

Like to the grass that's newly sprung,  
Or like a tale that's new begun,  
Or like a bird that's here to-day,  
Or like the pearled dew of May,  
Or like an hour, or like a span,  
Or like the singing of a swan,  
E'en such is man ;—who lives by breath,  
Is here, now there, in life and death.—  
The grass withers, the tale is ended,  
The bird is flown, the dew's ascended,  
The hour is short, the span not long,  
The swan's near death,—man's life is done !

SIMON WASTELL, *c.* 1625.

2. The following poems all deal in one way or another with the subject of contentment or happiness. Contrast the various methods of treatment. In some the thought is merely conventional, in others the writers are inspired by sincere feeling. Try to distinguish between the two types : a knowledge of the material circumstances of the different poets will be helpful. Do you think some of the poets were "borrowers" ?



## (a) The Means to attain Happy Life

Martial, the things that do attain  
 The happy life be these, I find :  
 The riches left, not got with pain,  
 The fruitful ground, the quiet mind,

The equal friend, no grudge, no strife,  
 No charge of rule nor governance ;  
 Without disease, the healthful life ;  
 The household of continuance ;

The mean diet, no delicate fare ;  
 True wisdom joined with simpleness ;  
 The night dischargèd of all care,  
 Where wine the wit may not oppress.

The faithful wife, without debate ;  
 Such sleep as may beguile the night ;  
 Contented with thine own estate,  
 Ne wish for death, ne fear his might.

HENRY HOWARD,  
 Earl of Surrey, *d.* 1547.

## (b) My Mind to me a Kingdom is

My mind to me a kingdom is,  
 Such present joys therein I find,  
 That it excels all other bliss  
 That earth affords or grows by kind :  
 Though most I want which most would have  
 Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,  
 No force to win the victory,  
 No wily wit to salve a sore,  
 No shape to feed a loving eye ;  
 To none of these I yield as thrall :  
 For why ? My mind doth serve for all.

I see how plenty surfeits oft,  
 And hasty climbers soon do fall ;  
 I see that those which are aloft  
 Mishap doth threaten most of all ;  
 They get with toil, they keep with fear ;  
 Such cares my mind could never bear.

Content to live, this is my stay ;  
 I seek no more than may suffice ;  
 I press to bear no haughty sway ;  
 Look, what I lack my mind supplies :  
 Lo, thus I triumph like a king,  
 Content with that my mind doth bring.

Some have too much, yet still do crave ;  
 I little have, and seek no more.  
 They are but poor, though much they have,  
 And I am rich with little store ;  
 They poor, I rich ; they beg, I give ;  
 They lack, I leave ; they pine, I live.

I laugh not at another's loss ;  
 I grudge not at another's pain ;  
 No worldly waves my mind can toss ;  
 My state at one doth still remain :  
 I fear no foe, I fawn no friend ;  
 I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,  
 Their wisdom by their rage of will .  
 Their treasure is their only trust ;  
 A cloaked craft their store of skill :  
 But all the pleasure that I find  
 Is to maintain a quiet mind.

My wealth is health and perfect ease :  
 My conscience clear my chief defence ;  
 I neither seek by bribes to please,  
 Nor by deceit to breed offence :  
 Thus do I live ; thus will I die ;  
 Would all did so as well as I !

SIR EDWARD DYER, 1550 ?-1607.



## (c) The Man of Life Upright

The man of life upright,  
Whose guiltless heart is free  
From all dishonest deeds,  
Or thought of vanity ;

The man whose silent days  
In harmless joys are spent,  
Whom hopes cannot delude,  
Nor sorrow discontent—

That man needs neither towers  
Nor armour for defence,  
Nor secret vaults to fly  
From thunder's violence.

He only can behold  
With unaffrighted eyes  
The horrors of the deep,  
And terrors of the skies.

Thus scorning all the cares  
That fate or fortune brings,  
He makes the heaven his book,  
His wisdom heavenly things.

Good thoughts his only friends,  
His wealth a well-spent age,  
The earth his sober inn  
And quiet pilgrimage.

THOMAS CAMPION, *d.* 1619.

## (d) The Happy Life

How happy is he born and taught  
That serveth not another's will ;  
Whose armour is his honest thought  
And simple truth his utmost skill ;

Whose passions not his masters are,  
 Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
 Untied unto the world by care  
 Of public fame, or private breath ;

Who envies none that chance doth raise  
 Nor vice ; who never understood  
 How deepest wounds are given by praise ;  
 Nor rules of state, but rules of good .

Who hath his life from rumours freed,  
 Whose conscience is his strong retreat ;  
 Whose state can neither flatterers feed,  
 Nor ruin make oppressors great .

Who God doth, late and early, pray  
 More of His grace than gifts to lend ;  
 And entertains the harmless day  
 With a religious book or friend !

This man is freed from servile bands  
 Of hope to rise, or fear to fall—  
 Lord of himself, though not of lands—  
 And, having nothing, yet hath all  
 SIR HENRY WOTTON, 1568-1639

### (e) Ode on Solitude

Happy the man whose wish and care  
 A few paternal acres bound,  
 Content to breathe his native air,  
 In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,  
 Whose flocks supply him with attire,  
 Whose trees in summer yield him shade,  
 In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find  
 Hours, days, and years slide soft away,  
 In health of body, peace of mind,  
 Quiet by day.



Sound sleep by night ; study and ease,  
 Together mixed ; sweet recreation ;  
 And innocence, which most doth please  
 With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown,  
 Thus unlamented let me die,  
 Steal from the world, and not a stone  
 Tell where I lie.

ALEXANDER POPE, 1688-1744.

(This poem is said to have been written when Pope was only twelve years of age. This should be remembered, and also the fact that he was delicate and deformed.)

### (f) A Wish

Mine be a cot beside the hill ;  
 A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear ;  
 A willowy brook, that turns a mill,  
 With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch,  
 Shall twitter from her clay-built nest ;  
 Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,  
 And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring  
 Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew ;  
 And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing  
 In russet gown and apron blue.

The village church among the trees,  
 Where first our marriage vows were given,  
 With merry peals shall swell the breeze,  
 And point with taper spire to heaven.

SAMUEL ROGERS, 1763-1855.

## (g) To-morrow

In the downhill of life, when I find I'm declining,  
 May my lot no less fortunate be  
 Than a snug elbow-chair can afford for reclining,  
 And a cot that o'erlooks the wide sea ;  
 With an ambling pad-pony to pace o'er the lawn,  
 While I carol away idle sorrow,  
 And blithe as the lark that each day hails the dawn  
 Look forward with hope for to-morrow.

With a porch at my door, both for shelter and shade too,  
 As the sunshine or shade may prevail ;  
 And a small spot of ground for the use of the spade too,  
 With a barn for the use of the flail ;  
 A cow for my dairy, a dog for my game,  
 And a purse when a friend wants to borrow ;  
 I'll envy no nabob his riches or fame,  
 Nor what honours await him to-morrow.

From the bleak northern blast may my cot be com-  
 pletely  
 Secured by a neighbouring hill ;  
 And at night may repose steal upon me more sweetly  
 By the sound of a murmuring rill :  
 And while peace and plenty I find at my board,  
 With a heart free from sickness and sorrow,  
 With my friends may I share what to-day may afford,  
 And let them spread the table to-morrow.

And when I at last must throw off this frail covering  
 Which I've worn for three-score years and ten,  
 On the brink of the grave I'll not seek to keep hovering,  
 Nor my thread wish to spin o'er again :  
 But my face in the glass I'll serenely survey,  
 And with smiles count each wrinkle and furrow ;  
 As this old worn-out stuff, which is threadbare to-day,  
 May become everlasting to-morrow.

J. COLLINS, 1742 ?-1808.



## (h) Sweet Content

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers ?

O sweet content !

Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplex'd ?

O punishment !

Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vex'd

To add to golden numbers golden numbers ?

O sweet content ! O sweet, O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace ;

Honest labour bears a lovely face ;

Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny !

Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring ?

O sweet content !

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears ?

O punishment !

Then he that patiently want's burden bears,

No burden bears, but is a king, a king !

O sweet content ! O sweet, O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace ;

Honest labour bears a lovely face ;

Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny !

THOMAS DEKKER, 1575-1641.

3. A peasant's wife and a king reflect in the following passages on the relative merits of humble life and life lived in palaces. Compare their points of view.

## The Shepherd's Wife's Song

Ah, what is love ? It is a pretty thing,

As sweet unto a shepherd as a king,

And sweeter too :

For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,

And cares can make the sweetest love to frown :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires do gain,

What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

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His flocks are folded, he comes home at night  
As merry as a king in his delight,

And merrier too :

For kings bethink them what the state re-  
quire,

Where shepherds careless carol by the fire.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

He kisseth first, then sits as blithe to eat  
His cream and curds, as doth the king his  
meat ;

And blither too :

For kings have often fears when they do sup,  
Where shepherds dread no poison in their cup.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Upon his couch of straw he sleeps as sound  
As doth the king upon his bed of down,

More sounder too :

For cares cause kings full oft their sleep to  
spill,

Where weary shepherds lie and snort their fill :

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

Thus with his wife he spends the year as blithe,  
As doth the king at every tide or syth,

And blither too :

For kings have wars and broils to take in hand,  
Where shepherds laugh, and love upon the  
land.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,  
What lady would not love a shepherd swain ?

ROBERT GREENE. 1560 ?-92.



King Henry soliloquizes before the Battle of  
Agincourt

What infinite heart's ease  
Must kings neglect that private men enjoy !  
And what have kings that privates have not too,  
Save ceremony, save general ceremony ?  
And what art thou, thou idol ceremony ?  
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more  
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers ?  
What are thy rents ? what are thy comings-in ?  
O ceremony, show me but thy worth !  
What is thy soul of adoration ?  
Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,  
Creating awe and fear in other men ?  
Wherein thou art less happy, being fear'd,  
Than they in fearing.  
What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,  
But poison'd flattery ? O ! be sick, great greatness,  
And bid thy ceremony give thee cure.  
Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out  
With titles blown from adulation ?  
Will it give place to flexure and low-bending ?  
Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,  
Command the health of it ? No, thou proud dream,  
That play'st so subtly with a king's repose ;  
I am a king that find thee ; and I know  
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,  
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,  
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,  
The farcèd title running 'fore the king,  
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp  
That beats upon the high shore of this world,  
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,  
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,  
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,  
Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind  
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread ;  
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,  
But, like a lackey, from the rise to set  
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night

Sleeps in Elysium ; next day after dawn,  
 Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,  
 And follows so the ever-running year  
 With profitable labour to his grave :  
 And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,  
 Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,  
 Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.  
 The slave, a member of the country's peace,  
 Enjoys it ; but in gross brain little wots  
 What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,  
 Whose hours the peasant best advantages.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564-1616.

(Which line in Greene's poem is particularly discordant ? Do you think Henry V. would like to have exchanged his lot with the peasant, or is he giving expression to a momentary mood ? Read the beginning of the scene, Act IV., Scene ii., in which this passage occurs.)

4. Examine the use of Personification in the following passages. Sort out the examples which seem by their force and truth to justify their use, and those which are of little poetic value.

(a) " How sleep the Brave who sink to rest  
 By all their Country's wishes blest !  
 When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
 Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,  
 She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
 Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
 By forms unseen their dirge is sung :  
 There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,  
 To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;  
 And Freedom shall awhile repair  
 To dwell, a weeping hermit, there ! "

(b) " The verse adorn again  
 Fierce War, and faithful Love,  
 And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.  
 In buskin'd measures move  
 Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,  
 With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast."



- (c) "As an Arab journeyeth  
Through a sand of Ayaman,  
Lean Thirst, lolling its cracked tongue,  
Lagging by his side along ;  
And a rusty-wingèd Death  
Grating its low flight before,  
Casting ribbèd shadows o'er  
The blank desert, blank and tan :  
He lifts by hap toward where the morning's roots are  
His weary stare."
- (d) "The thundering line of battle stands,  
And in the air Death moans and sings ;  
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,  
And Night shall fold him in soft wings."
- (e) "Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor."
- (f) "Be full, ye courts, be great who will ;  
Search for Peace with all your skill :  
Open wide the lofty door,  
Seek her on the marble floor,  
In vain you search, she is not there ;  
In vain ye search the domes of care !  
Grass and flowers Quiet treads,  
On the meads, and mountain-heads,  
Along with Pleasure, close allied,  
Ever by each other's side :  
And often, by the murmuring rill,  
Hears the thrush, while all is still,  
Within the groves of Grongar Hill."
- (g) "Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,  
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great ;  
Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,  
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall."
- (h) (A personification of autumn.)  
"Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies."

- (i) "First Fear his hand, its skill to try,  
Amid the chords bewilder'd laid,  
And back recoil'd, he knew not why,  
E'en at the sound himself had made.

Next Anger rush'd, his eyes on fire,  
In lightnings own'd his secret stings ;  
In one rude clash he struck the lyre  
And swept with hurried hand the strings."

- (j) "They sin who tell us Love can die.  
With life all other passions fly,  
All others are but vanity.  
In Heaven Ambition cannot dwell,  
Nor Avarice in the vaults of Hell ;  
Earthly these passions of the Earth,  
They perish where they have their birth."

- (k) "In the fell clutch of Circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud ;  
Under the bludgeonings of Chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

5. The three following poems treat of man's helplessness against Fate. Analyse their contents and say (a) in what respects they resemble one another, and (b) in what particulars they differ.

### On the Tombs in Westminster Abbey

Mortality, behold and fear,  
What a change of flesh is here !  
Think how many royal bones  
Sleep within these heaps of stones ;  
Here they lie, had realms and lands,  
Who now want strength to stir their hands,  
Where from their pulpits seal'd with dust  
They preach, "In greatness is no trust."



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

Here's an acre sown indeed  
 With the richest royallest seed  
 That the earth did e'er suck in  
 Since the first man died for sin :  
 Here the bones of birth have cried  
 " Though gods they were, as men they died !"  
 Here are sands, ignoble things,  
 Dropt from the ruin'd sides of kings :  
 Here's a world of pomp and state  
 Buried in dust, once dead by fate.

F. BEAUMONT, 1584-1616.

## The Last Conqueror

Victorious men of earth, no more  
 Proclaim how wide your empires are ;  
 Though you bind-in every shore,  
 And your triumphs reach as far  
 As night or day,  
 Yet you, proud monarchs, must obey  
 And mingle with forgotten ashes, when  
 Death calls ye to the crowd of common men.

Devouring Famine, Plague, and War,  
 Each able to undo mankind,  
 Death's servile emissaries are ;  
 Nor to these alone confined,  
 He hath at will  
 More quaint and subtle ways to kill ;  
 A smile or kiss, as he will use the art,  
 Shall have the cunning skill to break a heart.

J. SHIRLEY, 1596-1666.

## Death the Leveller

The glories of our blood and state  
 Are shadows, not substantial things ;  
 There is no armour against fate ;  
 Death lays his icy hand on kings ;  
 Sceptre and Crown  
 Must tumble down,  
 And in the dust be equal made  
 With the poor crookèd scythe and spade.

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION 167

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
And plant fresh laurels where they kill :  
But their strong nerves at last must yield ;  
They tame but one another still :  
Early or late  
They stoop to fate,  
And must give up their murmuring breath  
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow ;  
Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;  
Upon Death's purple altar now  
See where the victor-victim bleeds :  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb ;  
Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

J. SHIRLEY, 1596-1666.

(Note how the concluding thought of *The Last Conqueror* gains in force from association with what has gone before. *Death the Leveller* is a remarkable study in figurative language. It is worth your close attention. Note particularly the highly charged expression "victor-victim.")

6. Examine the thought-development of the following poem, and say on what principle it is constructed.

### ✓ Happy Insensibility

In a drear-nighted December,  
Too happy, happy tree,  
Thy branches ne'er remember  
Their green felicity :  
The north cannot undo them  
With a sleety whistle through them,  
Nor frozen thawings glue them  
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,  
Too happy, happy brook,  
Thy bubblings ne'er remember  
Apollo's summer look ;



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

But with a sweet forgetting  
 They stay their crystal fretting,  
 Never, never petting  
 About the frozen time.

Ah, would 'twere so with many  
 A gentle girl and boy !  
 But were there ever any  
 Writhed not at passèd joy ?  
 To know the change and feel it,  
 When there is none to heal it  
 Nor numbèd sense to steel it—  
 Was never said in rhyme.

JOHN KEATS, 1795-1821.

7. The following poem is a fine example of the poetic use of illustration. The *motif* of the poem is contained in three lines (not all in the same stanza): find it. Then state the argument in your own words.

## Love's Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river  
 And the rivers with the ocean,  
 The winds of heaven mix for ever  
 With a sweet emotion ;  
 Nothing in the world is single,  
 All things by a law divine  
 In one another's being mingle—  
 Why not I with thine ?

See the mountains kiss high heaven  
 And the waves clasp one another ;  
 No sister-flower would be forgiven  
 If it disdain'd its brother :  
 And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
 And the moonbeams kiss the sea—  
 What are all these kissings worth,  
 If thou kiss not me ?

P. B. SHELLEY, 1792-1822.

(Note that the metaphors of the first stanza are naturalistic, while those of the second are human and

more intimate. In other words, the argument is based first on reason and then on emotion.)

8. "Everywhere the intuition of poetry, impatient of the sturdy philosophic cripple that lags so far behind, is busy in advance to find likenesses not susceptible of scientific demonstration, to leap to comparisons that satisfy the heart while they leave the colder intellect only half convinced. When an elegant dilettante like Samuel Rogers is confronted with the principle of gravitation, he gives voice to science in verse :

" ' That very law which moulds a tree,  
And bids it trickle from its source,  
That law preserves the earth a sphere,  
And guides the planets in their course.'

" But a seer like Wordsworth will never be content to write tunes for a text-book of physics ; he boldly confounds the arbitrary limits of matter and morals in one splendid apostrophe to Duty :

" ' Flowers laugh before thee on their beds ;  
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;  
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh  
and strong.'

" Poets, it is said, anticipate science ; here, in these four lines, is work for a thousand years."

Professor RALEIGH.

Discuss this statement, and include in your investigations Wordsworth's " leap to comparisons " in the following passage, and Eugene Lee-Hamilton's retort which follows.

" I have seen  
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell ;  
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul  
Listened intensely ; and his countenance soon  
Brightened with joy, for from within were heard



Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed  
 Mysterious union with its native sea.  
 Even such a shell the universe itself  
 Is to the ear of Faith ; and there are times,  
 I doubt not, when to you it doth impart  
 Authentic tidings of invisible things ;  
 Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power ;  
 And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
 Of endless agitation."

" The hollow sea-shell which for years hath stood  
 On dusty shelves, when held against the ear  
 Proclaims its stormy parent ; and we hear  
 The faint far murmur of the breaking flood.  
 We hear the sea. The sea ? It is the blood  
 In our veins, impetuous and near,  
 And pulses keeping pace with hope and fear  
 And with our feelings' ever-shifting mood.  
 Lo ! in my heart I hear, as in a shell,  
 The murmur of a world beyond the grave,  
 Distinct, distinct, though faint and far it be.  
 Thou fool ! this echo is a cheat as well,—  
 The hum of earthly instincts ; and we crave  
 A world unreal as the shell-heard sea."

Is it possible that both these views are distorted ?

9. Comment upon the aptness or unsuitability of the style and diction employed in the following passages :

(a) " I never saw a man who looked  
 With such a wistful eye  
 Upon that little tent of blue  
 Which prisoners call the sky,  
 And at every wandering cloud that trailed  
 Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do  
 Those witless men who dare  
 To try to rear the changeling Hope  
 In the cave of black Despair :  
 He only looked upon the sun,  
 And drank the morning air.

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION 171

He did not wring his hands nor weep,  
Nor did he peek or pine,  
But he drank the air as though it held  
Some healthful anodyne ;  
With open mouth he drank the sun  
As though it had been wine !

And I and all the souls in pain,  
Who tramped the other ring,  
Forgot if we ourselves had done  
A great or little thing,  
And watched with gaze of dull amaze  
The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass  
With step so light and gay,  
And strange it was to see him look  
So wistfully at the day,  
And strange it was to think that he  
Had such a debt to pay.

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves  
That in the spring-time shoot :  
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,  
With its adder-bitten root,  
And, green or dry, a man must die  
Before it bears its fruit !

The loftiest place is that seat of grace  
For which all worldlings try :  
But who would stand in hempen band  
Upon a scaffold high,  
And through a murderer's collar take  
His last look at the sky ?

It is sweet to dance to violins  
When Love and Life are fair :  
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes  
Is delicate and rare :  
But it is not sweet with nimble feet  
To dance upon the air ! ”

OSCAR WILDE.

(b) " They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail :  
The whistles blow forlorn,  
And trains all night groan on the rail  
To men that die at morn.

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail to-night,  
Or wakes, as may betide,  
A better lad, if things went right,  
Than most that sleep outside.

And naked to the hangman's noose  
The morning clocks will ring  
A neck God made for other use  
Than strangling in a string.

And sharp the link of life will snap,  
And dead on air will stand  
Heels that held up as straight a chap  
As treads upon the land.

So here I'll watch the night and wait  
To see the morning shine,  
When he will hear the stroke of eight  
And not the stroke of nine ;

And wish my friend as sound a sleep  
As lads I did not know,  
That shepherded the moonlit sheep  
A hundred years ago."

A. E. HOUSMAN.

(c) " The morning dawned full darkly,  
The rain came flashing down,  
And the jagged streak of the levin-bolt  
Lit up the gloomy town :  
The thunder crashed across the heaven,  
The fatal hour was come ;  
Yet aye broke in with muffled beat  
The 'larum of the drum.  
There was madness on the earth below,  
And anger in the sky,  
And young and old, and rich and poor,  
Came forth to see him die.



Ah, God ! that ghastly gibbet !  
     How dismal 'tis to see  
 The great tall spectral skeleton,  
     The ladder and the tree !  
 Hark ! hark ! it is the clash of arms—  
     The bells begin to toll—  
 ' He is coming ! he is coming !  
     God's mercy on his soul !'  
 One long last peal of thunder—  
     The clouds are cleared away,  
 And the glorious sun once more looks down  
     Amidst the dazzling day.

    He is coming ! he is coming !'  
     Like a bridegroom from his room,  
 Came the hero from his prison  
     To the scaffold and the doom.  
 There was glory on his forehead,  
     There was lustre in his eye,  
 And he never walked to battle  
     More proudly than to die ;  
 There was colour in his visage,  
     Though the cheeks of all were wan,  
 And they marvelled as they saw him pass,  
     That great and goodly man !

He mounted up the scaffold,  
     And he turned him to the crowd ;  
 But they dared not trust the people,  
     So he might not speak aloud.  
 But he looked upon the heavens,  
     And they were clear and blue,  
 And in the liquid ether  
     The eye of God shone through !  
 Yet a black and murky battlement  
     Lay resting on the hill,  
 As though the thunder slept within—  
     All else was calm and still.

The grim Geneva ministers  
     With anxious scowl drew near,  
 As you have seen the ravens flock  
     Around the dying deer.

## THE STUDY OF POETRY

He would not deign them word nor sign,  
 But alone he bent the knee ;  
 And veiled his face for Christ's dear grace  
 Beneath the gallows-tree.  
 Then radiant and serene he rose,  
 And cast his cloak away :  
 For he had ta'en his latest look  
 Of earth and sun and day."

W. E. AYTOUN.

Estimate the influence of the mediæval ballad on each of these passages. Which of the three passages do you least prefer ? Are there any jarring notes ? If so, can they be justified or explained in any way ? Study the use of internal rhymes.

10. After reading the two following poems several times, set down in detail the points which differentiate the one from the other.

## 'Tis the Last Rose of Summer

'Tis the last rose of summer  
 Left blooming alone ;  
 All her lovely companions  
 Are faded and gone ;  
 No flower of her kindred,  
 No rosebud is nigh  
 To reflect back her blushes,  
 To give sigh for sigh.

I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,  
 To pine on the stem ;  
 Since the lovely are sleeping,  
 Go sleep thou with them.  
 Thus kindly I scatter  
 Thy leaves o'er the bed,  
 Where thy mates of the garden  
 Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may *I* follow  
 When friendships decay ;

And from Love's shining circle  
 The gems drop away.  
 When true hearts lie withered,  
 And fond ones are flown,  
 Oh ! who would inhabit  
 This bleak world alone ?

THOMAS MOORE.

### The Solitary Rose

O happy rose, red rose, that bloomest lonely  
 Where there are none to gather while they love  
 thee ;  
 Thou art perfumed by thine own fragrance only,  
 Resting like incense round thee and above thee ;  
 Thou hearest nought save some pure stream that flows :  
 O happy rose.

What though for thee no nightingales are singing ;  
 They chant the eve, but hush them in the morning.  
 Near thee no little moths and bees are winging  
 To steal thy honey when the day is dawning ;  
 Thou keep'st thy sweetness till the twilight's close,  
 O happy rose.

Then rest in peace, thou lone and lovely flower ;  
 Yea, be thou glad, knowing that none are near  
 thee  
 To mar thy beauty in a wanton hour,  
 And scatter all thy leaves nor deign to wear thee.  
 Securely in thy solitude repose,  
 O happy rose.

C. G. ROSSETTI.

11. In the following lines the poet likens himself to the poppy, and the man of affairs to goodly grain. Discuss the aptness of the analogy, and transpose it into a prose paragraph.

" The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,  
 Heavy with dreams, as that with bread ;  
 The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper  
 The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.



I hang 'mid men my needless head,  
 And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread :  
 The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper  
 Time shall reap ; but after the reaper  
 The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper ! ”  
 FRANCIS THOMPSON.

12. Two consonants have a large share in the musical effect of the following lines. What are they ? What particular effect do they generally produce ? Study their effect elsewhere.

“ Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,  
 And drowned in yonder living blue  
 The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,  
 The flocks are whiter down the vale,  
 And milkier every milky sail  
 On winding stream or distant sea.”

TENNYSON.

What would be the effect of punctuating the third line as follows :

“ And, drowned in yonder living blue,” . . .

Would it be an improvement ?

13. Say which of the following versions you prefer, and why.

(a) “ Where Freedom broadens slowly down  
 From precedent to precedent.”

(b) “ Where Freedom slowly broadens down  
 From precedent to precedent.”

14. Compare the use of the consonant *s* in :

(a) “ Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
 Than tir'd eyelids on tir'd eyes.”

(b) “ The swallow stopt as he hunted the bee,  
 The snake slipt under a spray.”

(c) “ In summer suit and silks of holiday.”

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15. Why should Tennyson and Kingsley use the same method—the one in verse, the other in prose—in the following passages? What is the special virtue of this style?

(a) “ At last they issued from the world of wood,  
And climb’d upon a fair and even ridge,  
And show’d themselves against the sky, and sank.  
And thither came Geraint, and underneath  
Beheld the long street of a little town.”

(b) “ And as the heroes listened, the oars fell from their hands, and their heads drooped on their breasts, and they closed their heavy eyes; and they dreamed of bright, still gardens, and of slumbers under murmuring pines, till all their toil seemed foolishness, and they thought of their renown no more.”

16. Below are given two passages from Swinburne in the same metre. Read them aloud several times and try to account for the totally different effects they produce.

(a) “ Not I would sunder tomb from tomb  
Of these twin foes of mine, in death made one—  
I, that when darkness hides me from the sun  
Shall sleep alone, with none to rest by me.  
But thou—this one time more I look on thee—  
Fair face, brave hand, weak heart that wast not  
mine—  
Sleep sound—and God be good to thee, Locrine.  
I was not. She was fair as heaven in spring  
Whom thou didst love indeed. Sleep, queen and  
king,  
Forgiven; and if—God knows—being dead, ye live,  
And keep remembrance yet of me—forgive.”

(b) “ Like fire  
The lit dewes lightened on the leaves, as higher  
Night’s heart beat on toward midnight. Far and fain  
Somewhiles the soft rush of rejoicing rain  
Solaced the darkness, and from steep to steep  
Of heaven they saw the sweet sheet lightning leap  
And laugh its heart out in a thousand smiles,  
When the clear sea for miles on glimmering miles



Burned as though dawn were strewn abroad astray,  
Or, showering out of heaven, all heaven's array  
Had paven instead the waters."

17. Discuss the relative merits of the two following methods of poetic description :

(a) " Come on, sir : here's the place : stand still. How fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low !  
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles ; half-way down  
Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade !  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring bark  
Diminish'd to her cock, her cock a buoy  
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,  
That on the unnumber'd pebbles chafes,  
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,  
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
Topple down headlong."

(b) " At once as far as Angels kenn he views  
The dismal Situation waste and wilde,  
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
That comes to all ; but torture without end  
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed  
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd :  
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd  
For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd  
In utter darkness, and their portion set  
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n  
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole."

18. Read Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and answer the following questions :

(a) What poetic ends do the following passages serve ?



(i.) "The sedge is withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing."

(ii.) "The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done."

(b) What food did the maiden prepare for the knight?  
Why not a rabbit, for instance, supposing they could  
have caught one?

(c) Was there any literary authority for "kisses *four*"?

19. What are the chief poetic ingredients of the following passages?

(a) "See how from far upon the eastern road  
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:  
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,  
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet."

(b) "He will watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees i' the ivy-bloom."

(c) "Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicean barks of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary way-worn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore."

(d) "Sabrina fair,  
Listen where thou art sitting  
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair."

(e) "In Ausonian land  
Men called him Mulciber."

(f) "There was a dwelling of kings ere the world was waxen  
old;  
Dukes were the door-wards there, and the roofs were  
thatched with gold;

Earls were the wrights that wrought it, and silver  
 nailed its doors ;  
 Earls' wives were the weaving-women, queens'  
 daughters strewed its floors,  
 And the masters of its song-craft were the mightiest  
 men that cast  
 The sails of the storm of battle adown the bickering  
 blast."

(g) " The River dawdled silver-clean,  
 A lane of mirrored sky,  
 Through marsh and lawn of jewelled green,  
 And restless fields of rye,  
 Through haze and heat and round the feet  
 Of meadow-sweet July."

(h) " Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,  
 Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,  
 Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,  
 Pounded on the table,  
 Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom  
 Hard as they were able,  
 Boom, boom, boom,  
 With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,  
 Boomlay, boomlay, boomly, boom."

(i) " It seemed that out of the battle I escaped  
 Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
 Through granites which Titanic wars had groined,  
 Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,  
 Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.  
 Then, as I probed them, one sprang up and stared  
 With piteous recognition in fixed eyes."

(j) " It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
 Breathless with adoration."

(k) " Wanton with long delay the gay Spring leaping  
 cometh ;  
 The blackthorn starreth now his bough on the  
 eve of May :

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION 181

All day in the sweet box-tree the bee for pleasure  
hummeth :

The cuckoo sends afloat his note on the air all  
day.

Now dewy nights again and rain in gentle shower  
At roots of tree and flower have quenched the  
winter's drouth :

On high the hot sun smiles, and banks of cloud  
uptower

In bulging heads that crowd for miles the dazzling  
south."

(There is some curious rhyming here which you will  
miss if you are not alert.)

(l) " Very old are we men ;  
Our dreams are tales  
Told in dim Eden  
By Eve's nightingales ;

We wake and whisper awhile,  
But, the day gone by,  
Silence and sleep like fields  
Of amaranth lie."

(m) " Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
Where the winds are all asleep ;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream, . . .  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and aye."

(n) " Slowly, silently, now the moon  
Walks the night in her silver shoon ;  
This way and that she peers and sees  
Silver fruit upon silver trees."

(o) " Who made the splendid rose  
Saturate with purple glows ;  
Cupped to the marge with beauty ; a perfume-press  
Whence the wind vintages



Gushes of warmed fragrance richer far  
 Than all the flavorful ooze of Cyprus' vats ?  
 Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,  
     With dusky cheeks burnt red  
     She sways her heavy head,  
 Drunk with the must of her own odorousness."

(p) " And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,  
 In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,  
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;  
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,  
 And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;  
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd  
 From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,  
 From silken Samarkand to cedar'd Lebanon."

(q) " A mighty mass of brick and smoke and shipping,  
     Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye  
     Could reach—with here and there a sail just skip-  
         ping  
     In sight—then lost amidst the forestry  
 Of masts ;—a wilderness of steeples peeping  
     On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy ;  
 A huge dim cupola, like a foolscap crown  
     On a fool's head—and there is London town !"

(r) " For never, since created Man,  
 Met such embodied force as, named with these,  
 Could merit more than that small infantry  
 Warred on by cranes—though all the giant brood  
 Of Phlegra with the heroic race were joined  
 That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side  
 Mixed with auxiliar gods ; and what resounds  
 In fable or romance of Uther's son,  
 Begirt with British and Armoric knights ;  
 And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
 Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
 Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisonde,  
 Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore  
 When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
 By Fontarabbia."

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION 183

20. Some of our latter day poets contend that the poetry of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and the rest, is antiquated, and that the world is ready for a poetic revolution. They are for ever striving after some new thing. For the benefit of the curious I quote a few examples of their work. They should be read carefully, and their qualities examined with an open mind. Several of them may find champions among you. What are they aiming at?

(a) Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell describes the conditions under which an actor rehearses.

"A bed, a chair, a table, and a cupboard  
Stand in this bare room and rattle at my tread.  
Save for these and a mirror is my room quite bare;  
It is empty like a honeycomb that holds no honey,  
For the sun never comes to load my cell with  
light.  
The paper that strips itself from off my walls  
Is canvas dropped away and rotting from its scaffold-  
ing:  
My moonlight tempered with black smoke—  
The magnesium lights that groan before each flare—  
It is too dark for reflections to play upon the walls.  
So I have no gilded lattices against my bruised  
plaster,  
My window-panes, like broken mirrors,  
Showing me no starlight, that wood of golden trees—  
I'm left with nothing, with bare boards and rain-  
soaked ceiling."

(b) "Deadness of English winter dreariness  
Cold sky over provincial towns mist  
Melancholy of undulating trams  
Solitary jangling through muddy streets  
Narrowness imperfection dullness  
Black extinguisher over English towns  
Mediocre women in dull clothes  
Their nudity a disaster  
Heavy cunning men guts and passbooks  
Relics of gentry men on bicycles."

R. ALDINGTON.



- (c) "Pharaoh will speak, and I'll seize that word to act,  
Should the word be a foe's, I can use it well  
As a poison to soak into Egypt's bowels,  
A wraith from Old Nile will cry  
'For his mercy they brake his back,'  
And I shall have a great following for this  
The rude touched heart of the mauled sweaty  
horde,  
Their rough tongues fawn at my hands, their red  
streaked eyes  
Glitter with sacrifice. Well! Pharaoh bids me act.  
Hah! I'm all abristle. Lord! his eyes would go  
wide  
If he knew the road my rampant dreams would  
race;  
I am too much awake now—restless, so restless."

ISAAC ROSENBERG.

- (d) "While I was fishing in the dull canal  
On a winter evening round behind the gas-house,  
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck  
And on the king my father's death before him,  
White bodies naked on the low damp ground,  
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,  
Rattled by the rat's foot only year to year.  
But at my back from time to time I hear  
The sounds of horns and motors, which shall bring  
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.  
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter  
And on her daughter,  
They wash their feet in soda water,  
Et oh! ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la  
cupole!"

T. S. ELIOT.

21. "Alpha of the Plough" quotes the following passages as examples of "word-magic." Trace them to their context, and try to extract the secret of their charm. Arrange them in the order of your own preference.

- (a) "From the lone shieling of the misty island  
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—  
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,  
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides."



- (b) "Be it granted me to behold you again, in dying,  
Hills of home, and to hear again the call,  
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees  
crying—  
And hear no more at all."
- (c) "Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides."
- (d) "But an old age serene and bright,  
And lovely as a Lapland night,  
Shall lead thee to thy grave."
- (e) "Silent, upon a peak in Darien."
- (f) "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free ;  
The holy time is quiet as a nun,  
Breathless with adoration."
- (g) "Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breath-  
ing."
- (h) "Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme  
To take into the air my quiet breath."
- (i) "Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star  
Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone."

22. The following passages appear in pairs. The second passage in each pair was written later than, and no doubt was inspired by, its companion. Estimate the value of the plunder in each case.

- (a) "The seas they shall run dry,  
And rocks melt into sands ;  
Then I'll love you still, my dear,  
When all those things are done."

"Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun !  
And I will luv thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run."

- (b) "The One remains ; the many change and pass ;  
 Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows  
       fly ;  
 Life, *like a dome of many-coloured glass*,  
 Stains the white radiance of eternity  
 Until Death tramples it to fragments."

"Our little systems have their day.  
 They have their day and cease to be :  
*They are but broken lights of Thee*,  
 And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

- (c) "What beckoning ghost, besprent with April dew,  
 Hails me so solemnly to yonder yew ?"

"What beckoning ghost along the moonlight shade  
 Invites my steps and points to yonder glade ?"

(This question, like its predecessor, is based on an essay  
 by "Alpha of the Plough.")

23. Write an essay on "Plagiarism," using as an  
 introduction the following lines by Kipling :

"When 'Omer smote his bloomin' lyre,  
   'E 'eard men sing by land and sea,  
 And what 'e thought 'e might require  
   'E went and took—the same as me.

Men knew he stole ; 'e knew they knowed.  
 They never made no noise or fuss,  
 But winked at 'Omer down the road,  
 And 'e winked back—the same as us."

24. Describe in detail the poetic ingredients of the  
 following passages :

- (a) "The blue-leaved fig-trees swell with laughter,  
 Gold fissures split the rife fruits after,

And like a gold-barred tiger, shade  
 Leaps in the darkness that they made.

The long-ribbed leaves shed light that dapples  
 Silenus like a tun of apples ;

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Gold-freckled, fruit-shaped faces stare  
At nymphs with bodies white as air."

EDITH SITWELL.

(b) " So word by word and line by line,  
The dead man touched me from the past,  
And all at once it seem'd at last  
His living soul was flash'd on mine.

And mine in his was wound and whirl'd  
About empyreal heights of thought,  
And came on that which is, and caught  
The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out  
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—  
The blows of Death. At length my trance  
Was cancelled, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words ! but ah ! how hard to frame  
In matter-moulded forms of speech,  
Or ev'n for intellect to reach  
Thro' memory that which I became :

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd  
The knolls once more, where, couch'd at ease,  
The white kine glimmered, and the trees  
Laid their dark arms about the field ;

And suck'd from out the distant gloom  
A breeze began to tremble o'er  
The large leaves of the sycamore,  
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,  
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung  
The heavy-folded rose, and flung  
The lilies to and fro, and said :

' The dawn, the dawn ! ' and died away ;  
And East and West, without a breath,  
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,  
To broaden into boundless day."

TENNYSON.



- (c) " A little time that we may fill  
Or with such good works, or such ill,  
As loose the bonds or make them strong  
Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.  
By rose-hung river or light-foot rill  
There are who rest not : who think long  
Till they discern as from a hill  
At the Sun's hour of morning-song,  
Known of souls only, and those souls free,  
The sacred spaces of the sea."

SWINBURNE.

- (d) " Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back  
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,  
A great-sized monster of ingratitude :  
Those scraps are good deeds past,  
Which are devour'd as fast as they are made,  
Forgot as soon as done : perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps honour bright : to have done, is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way ;  
For honour travels in a strait so narrow  
Where one but goes abreast ; keep then the path ;  
For emulation hath a thousand sons  
That one by one pursue : if you give way  
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,  
Like to an enter'd tide they all rush by  
And leave you hindmost :  
Or, like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,  
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,  
O'errun and trampled on."

SHAKESPEARE.

- (e) " To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more : it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing."

SHAKESPEARE.

## THE PROBLEM OF APPRECIATION 189

25. What particular effects are aimed at in the following passages? When you have studied them, write an essay on "Striving after Effect in Poetry."

(a) "Weed-bound, green as grass, the pond lies,  
With a crazy hole-riddled tin  
Battered and broken, riding ship-wise  
On the water's warm green skin  
That bears like a floor the weight of June."

(b) "Sudden in the paddock the old cock crew  
As if a key shrieked in a lock grown rusty."

(c) "Oh swiftly can speed my dapple-grey steed!"

(d) "If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the  
bents  
Were jealous else. What made those holes and  
rents  
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to  
balk  
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk  
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents."

(e) "Hear the mellow wedding bells,  
Golden bells!  
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!  
Through the balmy air of night  
How they ring out their delight!  
From the molten-golden notes,  
And all in tune,  
What a liquid ditty floats  
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats  
On the moon!

Hear the loud alarum bells—  
Brazen bells!  
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!  
In the startled ear of night  
How they scream out their affright!

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Too much horrified to speak,  
 They can only shriek, shriek,  
 Out of tune,  
 In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,  
 In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire."

(f) " I chatter over stony ways,  
 In little sharps and trebles,  
 I bubble into eddying bays,  
 I babble on the pebbles."

(g) " I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore."

(h) " What sorrow would it be  
 That mountain floods should thunder as before  
 And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,  
 And neither awful voice be heard by thee ! "

(i) " Come and kiss me ! Come and kiss me !  
 Dō it ! Dō it !  
 See to it ! See to it !  
 Nor rue it—rue it !

Such a pretty Dick !  
 Pretty Dick ! Pretty Dick !  
 Pretty ! Pretty ! Pretty !  
 Be quick ! Be quick !

Churl ! Churl ! Churl ! Churl !  
 TSCHURL !!!—not to do it !  
 Pōōr—y Dick ! Pōōr—y Dick !  
 Dō—oo—oo it ! "

(j) " Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in  
 lilac-time,  
 Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from  
 London !)  
 And you shall wander hand in hand with love in  
 summer's wonderland ;  
 Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from  
 London !)."



(k) "Time. Time!

I hear my whistle shriek,  
Between teeth set;  
I fling an arm up,  
Scramble up the grime  
Over the parapet!  
I'm up. Go on.  
Something meets us.  
Head down into the storm that greets us.  
A wail.  
Lights. Blurr.  
Gone.  
On, on. Lead. Leād. Hail.  
Spatter. Whirr! Whirr!"

(l) "The morning's crimson stain tinges their ashen  
brows

As they part the last boughs and slowly step again  
On to the village grass, and chill and languid pass  
Into the huts to sleep.

Brief slumber, yet so deep  
That when they wake to-day, darkness and splendour  
seem

Broken and far away, a faint miraculous dream;  
And when those maidens rise they are as they ever  
were

Save only for a rare shade of trouble in their eyes.  
And the surly thick-lipped men, as they sit about  
their huts

Making drums out of guts, grunting gruffly now and  
then,

Carving sticks of ivory, stretching shields of wrinkled  
skin,

Smoothing sinister and thin squatting gods of ebony,  
Chip and grunt and do not see."

(m) "Conductor, when you receive a fare,  
Punch in the presence of the passengare.  
A blue trip-slip for an eight-cent fare,  
A buff trip-slip for a six-cent fare,  
A pink trip-slip for a three-cent fare,  
Punch in the presence of the passengare!"

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## CHAPTER V

### THE PROGRESS OF POESY

THE literary fashions with which men have clothed their thoughts throughout our history have been almost as clearly marked as the fashions which have prevailed in clothes and in architecture ; and it is not too much to ask of a well-read man that he should be able to " place " a book in its period by an examination of its content and style, just as he can date a Tudor costume by its ruff or a Gothic window by its tracery. For this purpose it is not necessary for him to have any detailed knowledge of the history of our literature. It is sufficient if he knows the ideals, thoughts, and movements which from age to age have urged men to write, and the special literary forms which have been in favour from time to time.

#### *Before the Conquest.*

Old English poetry need not detain us long. For one thing its bulk is not considerable ; in the second place, its linguistic difficulties are such as to exclude it from the bookshelves of the average reader. Those of you, however, whose inclinations may lead you into these early paths of our literature will chance upon some delectable prospects. In *Beowulf*, our only genuine epic and probably the oldest epic of the Teutonic races, you will find not only a good tale but also a lively picture of the tribal life of our ancestors. There are lyrics, too, of a haunting sadness, claimed to have no superiors in our tongue, and others which glow



with genuine patriotic fervour. The influence of the early missionaries can be studied in the religious poetry of Caedmon and Cynewulf; it is impossible not to realize, however, that whatever this religious poetry gained in other respects it lost much of the charm of the older heathen song.

The form of Old English poetry is easily recognized. Each long line was divided into halves by a pause, the two parts being bound together by alliteration or head-rhyme. There was no end-rhyme. A striking feature was the use of compound nouns. In one short passage a "ship" appears as (1) "the sound-wood," (2) "the wave-floater," (3) "the sea-goer," (4) "the foamy-necked," (5) "the bound-stemmed." The love of alliterative jingle in its early form lived on till Chaucer's time. Its effect may be seen in the following short passage from his contemporary poet, Langland.

"Thanne gan I to meten • a merueilouse sweuene,  
That I was in a wilderness • wist I neuer where;  
As I bihelde in-to the est • an hiegh to the sonne,  
I seigh a toure on a toft • trielich ymaked;  
A depe dale binethe • a dongeon there-Inne,  
With depe dyches & derke • and dredful of sight.  
A faire felde ful of folke • fonde I there bytwene,  
Of alle maner of men • the mene and the riche,  
Worchyng and wandryng • as the worlde asketh.  
Some putten hem to the plow • pleyed ful selde,  
In setting and in sowyng • swonken ful harde,  
And women that wastours • with glotonye destruyeth."

### *The Normans and After.*

During the Norman invasion and settlement much of our early poetry disappeared. What remained was preserved in the monasteries, where alone the old literature was still cherished. We are now more concerned with what the Normans brought than with what

*meten*, to dream.

*toft*, hill.

*swonken*, worked.

(3,010)

*sweuene*, a dream.

*trielich*, choicely.

*wastours*, waste one's substance.

*toure*, tower.

*felde*, field.



either they or earlier invaders destroyed. "It was through the Normans," says J. R. Lowell, "that the English mind and fancy, hitherto provincial and uncouth, were first infused with the lightness, grace, and self-confidence of Romance literature." His tribute to the Normans is perhaps sounder than his criticism of Early English poetry, and there is no doubt that from the *trouvères* of the Continent our poetry learned some of the Roman culture and humour which were to bloom freely in their season. In other words, English poetry became for a time cosmopolitan. In subjects and literary forms it fell into line with the literature of Western Europe. "Up to the middle of the thirteenth century," says Professor Courthope, "European poetry may be said to possess a universal character. Whether composed in Latin or in any of the infant vernacular tongues, the thoughts embodied in it—scientific, devotional, sentimental, or romantic—are completely free from local or national colouring. . . . Love-poetry composed by the troubadours of Provence is intelligible to the knights of the German castles; and the tales of Lancelot and Guinevere, or Tristram and Iseult, written perhaps beyond the English Channel, are read on the shores of Rimini." Towards the end of the thirteenth century England alone began to produce a consciously national poetry, urging England's need of devoted men and her worthiness.

Another result of the Norman occupation is seen in the gradual disappearance of alliteration in favour of the French system of end-rhyme. As far as the language is concerned, after suffering a literary eclipse, English again emerged as the standard language of the nation—not in a pure state, but containing a large alloy of Norman French. Historical events had encouraged the merging of the two races, and by the time of Chaucer the union was complete.

Piety and adventure had been the inspiration of early English poetry. The Normans had brought with

them Romance, and now were to be added themes which had their roots in the social and religious conditions of the time. The glamour of Edward III.'s successful wars could not hide the miseries of taxation, poverty, plague, and famine. The Church was becoming worldly and corrupt, and the unquestioning faith in ecclesiastical authority which had burned steadily in the days of Caedmon and Cynewulf was now flickering fitfully amid gusts of doubt. Chaucer's easy-going nature enabled him to view these evils dispassionately, but his humour shows us clearly enough that they existed. In the work of his contemporary, Langland, a born reformer, you will find how the injustice and wickedness of the time reacted on a sensitive and ardent nature.

In one respect the early Middle Ages were a time of intense spiritual gloom. The Church taught that man was born in sin, was therefore inherently wicked, and could hope for salvation only by making this world exclusively a preparation for the next. Thus it was an age of cloisters, hermits, nuns, and anchorites. The Renaissance restored man's faith in himself, and Chaucer's humanism, his unconcealed delight in the company of his fellow-men and fellow-women, and in the good things of life, was the first breath of this new spirit in English poetry. His romantic tales, also, are to be traced through Boccaccio to the Renaissance, that extraordinary literary and artistic movement which had just begun in Italy, and which was not to find an England ready to receive it for another two hundred years. The courtly, urbane, tolerant Chaucer and the democratic, uncouth, and uncompromising Langland give, between them, a comprehensive picture of the England of their day.

Of the songs of the period, some were directly inspired by the Church; their models were the Latin hymns, and their note was one of fervent piety. The Normans had taught us the love-song, which had be-



come the stock-in-trade of the wandering student and the minstrel. Professor Courthope has pointed out the significant fact that while an autumnal or winter background is chosen for the religious lyrics, "the conventional background of the new love-poetry is always spring or summer :

‘Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth,’

for the new lyric had its birth in Provence, and still favours its southern ancestry."

The personal note is rarely sounded in Middle English poetry. The poet seems rather to be the mouth-piece of his fellows, with whom he shares a common emotion. How different this from Shakespeare :

“ When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes  
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state ; ”

or Keats :

“ On the shore  
Of the wide world I stand alone and think.”

### *The Fifteenth Century.*

The meagre crop of poetry harvested from the fifteenth century may be explained in several ways. A disordered state, distracted by civil strife, when

“ Long years of havoc urge their destined course,  
And through the kindred squadrons mow their way,”

was uncongenial soil for the seed of verse. The mass of the people were uneducated, and their spirits depressed by the intolerance of the Church. The universities were enveloped in a fog of mediæval abstract philosophy. The social and political history of the time shows, however, that vast changes were impending, but as yet no great poet had arisen to hold up the



mirror to his age. The old themes of the romancers still held the field, and versifiers doggedly imitated Chaucer. For freshness and originality we must look to the Scottish poets, who, while accepting the conventions established by Chaucer, gave evidence of a first-hand knowledge and love of nature.

It has become the custom to depreciate the poetic garner of the fifteenth century, but we should remember with gratitude that it was during these "barren" years that many of our most popular ballads were taking shape, and there is no doubt that, in spite of their crudeness, these early ballads helped to create that craving for poetry which the next age was to satisfy so abundantly.

### *The Renaissance and After.*

It has already been shown that in its early stages the Italian Renaissance had, through Petrarch and Boccaccio, influenced the work of Chaucer and his contemporaries. The full force of the movement was not felt in this country until the sixteenth century, by which time the powerful aid of the printer was available. What exactly was the Renaissance, and what were its effects? As early as the fourteenth century the Italian people began to set a special value on the legacy they had received from Rome and, through Rome, from Greece. Interest in the ancient literatures grew apace, and with it developed an intense national pride. "Patriotic feeling was not content with claiming past glories; it preached the duty of their renewal, and idealized the Augustan period as the golden age of mankind, which could be brought back again by laborious study of the thoughts and deeds of its great exemplars. . . . The men of the early Renaissance were ready to initiate a new age, to take up the chain of historical unity where the barbarians had snapped it, to claim the entire antique culture as the

due possession of modern Italy." \* In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople, and Greek refugees arrived in Italy with priceless treasures from their libraries. They were welcomed with enthusiasm, and Italians of all ages and classes plunged into classical studies with a zeal which would have astonished, and under difficulties which would have appalled, the modern school-boy. This passion for knowledge was not confined to literature: there was scarcely any branch of thought into which their curiosity did not penetrate. Emerging from the cold world of mediæval theology, it pursued its ample way in the warm and generous atmosphere of a recreated pagan universe. It was a rebirth of mind as well as of letters. The spirit of inquiry, after several centuries of repression, burst with delighted amazement into a world full of beauteous objects and joyous feelings which man had been taught to regard as the specious snares of the evil one. In questioning the authority of the Church it prepared the way for the Reformation. It looked beyond the known horizons of earth and sea "with a wild surmise," and stirred the hearts of the great navigators. It led scholars into new or forgotten fields of literature and science, and provided artists with a vast range of new subjects. Rejecting the asceticism of the early Middle Ages, it averred that the earth had an important place in the scheme of things, and that "man was the noblest work of God." The student prince of Wittenberg was to declare later on: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form, and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" As you may imagine, Italy became the paragon of nations. Scholars from every European country studied in her schools and universities, and returned home "rich with the spoils of time."

\* Professor W. H. Woodward.



Even her fashions and rules of deportment were slavishly followed abroad ; the " Italianate Englishman " was a frequent object of derision in Shakespeare's England. The Welsh captain in *Henry V.* extols Alexander of Macedon as the supreme authority on tactics, and swaggering camp followers like Pistol mishandle tags of classical learning in an attempt to ape their betters. Scholarly aristocrats like Wyatt and Surrey introduced the Italian sonnet ; popular dramatists like Shakespeare adapted Italian stories for the English stage ; serious philosophers like Bacon had their works translated into Latin, " for I do conceive," he writes, " that the Latin volume of them, being in the universal language, may last as long as books last." . . . " For," he says elsewhere, " these modern languages will, at one time or other, play the bankrupt with books."

The scrupulous scholarship of the Renaissance student as applied to the great masterpieces of antiquity should be compared with their treatment at the hands of the mediæval writer, who took great, and at times fantastic liberties in adapting classical story and legend. The classical heroes even of Spenser and Shakespeare look out at us from casements of mediæval romance. The latter shows us Elizabethans gathered in the Roman Forum, and to the ears of Roman nobles of a pre-Christian era are wafted the chimes of an English Gothic cathedral. This romantic strain is heard, too, at rarer intervals in the symphonic poetry of Milton, in spite of which Milton was, perhaps, our first satisfactory interpreter of the classical world.

The Reformation, as one of the forces allied to the Renaissance, had an influence on English literature in particular that can scarcely be exaggerated. This powerful religious movement had made the Bible common property, and in England particularly the noble language of the translators not only stimulated a more enlightened faith in divine wisdom, but also introduced



into our speech those golden cadences which are among the most cherished glories of our literature.

“ We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held.”

Before the Reformation popular impressions of the Bible were taken from such curious collections of Biblical lore as were to be found in Miracle and Mystery Plays or in Greek and Oriental versions. “ The mediæval man in the street,” says Professor Grierson, “ knew the story of Adam’s death, what happened to Cain and his descendants. . . . He knew about Noah’s wife, that famous shrew who sat drinking with her gossips when the flood was ‘ fleeting in full fast.’ He thought of Herod and Pilate as notorious braggarts. He pictured the shepherds who kept watch on the night of the Nativity as English peasants blowing their nails and complaining of landlords and taxes. . . . All these things formed a kind of permanent background to his life, meeting him at every turn in sermon and hymn, in story and play, in sculptured ornament and coloured glass. To picture to yourself the Biblical and religious background of our older literature almost to Shakespeare, to see what the older readers saw as they read, you must go to the picture galleries, illuminated MSS., the glass and the carvings of our cathedrals or those of the Continent.”

After the Reformation the Bible came home more to men’s bosoms and began to occupy an entirely different place in the scheme of things. The older notions reappear fitfully—even in Milton the angels and devils are still mediæval in features if not in their disputations—but once stripped of its accumulated superstitions and presented in such a form that he who ran might read, the Bible became the most precious heritage of the Anglo-Saxon races. “ The surface of our common culture,” says one writer, “ is littered by

transient enthusiasms, vulgar emotions, and moral wreckage ; but below strong currents move steadily. In large measure these currents flow from the Bible, which now for four centuries has been the ultimate source of Anglo-Saxon realism. The Bible has shaped the English language ; but it has also been the supreme spiritually-creative force in the civilization of the British Empire and the American Commonwealth."

A knowledge of these currents is essential to any one who hopes to find his way among the "many western islands" which entranced the exploring genius of Keats. The realms of Shakespeare, Milton, and their fellows are held in fealty to Apollo. But Apollo is no jealous god ; there is room for a God to whom even Apollo must bow, and at the other extreme for a local patriotism which in England reached its highest point in the extravagant homage paid to the virgin queen.

The Reformation brought about England's breach with Rome and afterwards the Puritan Revolution. The poetry of Milton reflects clearly the struggles and changing ideals of the time. In an age of intense religious antipathies fanatics are sure to abound. Fanaticism has no discrimination ; in sifting out the good it loses much that is beautiful. It is the special glory of Milton that his stern conflict with the powers of evil in our national life did not dim his perceptions to the glories of art and literature. Ready as we are to acknowledge the lofty idealism and upright way of life of the Puritan zealots, we find it impossible to forget their senseless mutilation of statues and "storied windows, richly dight," on which mediæval craftsmen had spent such loving care. We remember, too, that their hatred of the stage was so unrelenting that had Shakespeare been born a few years later his art would probably have "passed in smother." Finally, their hard and inhuman bigotry produced results which they did not foresee. No normal-minded community will submit for long to a doctrine that considers mirth



inconsistent with goodness. Most men believe with Mr. Masefield that

“The days that make us happy make us wise.”

Unfortunately the moral discipline of the people had been so harsh and unreasonable that when the opportunity to cast it off arose, as it did at the Restoration, the natural, if regrettable, consequence was an orgy of shameless licence that not even the most charitable mind can condone. Godliness and virtue were openly derided, and the loudest scoffers were to be found in the highest places of the land. If some dispassionate historian were to trace the origins of the world's greatest calamities he would present us with a black-list of extremists, most of whom were honest men.

The fierce mental and spiritual strife which scorched the souls of the English people during the religious and political upheavals of Stuart and Commonwealth times affected the poets of the period in different ways. That a note of deep seriousness should pervade the work of some writers was only to be expected, and this seriousness was not confined to one camp. Many of the Cavalier poets, godless as they were accounted by the Puritan zealots, were men of deep religious feeling, and men like Crashaw, Vaughan, and Herbert, being unhampered by any Puritan qualms as to the morality of art, produced devotional poems of rare beauty and sincerity. Others, however, practised their art as a way of escape from the time's distresses, and tried to recapture the buoyant, care-free spirit of the Elizabethans. To them we owe the poetry of gallantry and courtly compliment, such as we associate with the names of Sedley and Suckling. Delightful as this poetry often is, it often degenerates into clever trifling and verbal obscurity. Poets tortured images which had no secrets to divulge. Simple utterance became an unpardonable gaucherie, and the Muse lost her way in a wilderness of arid imagery.

*The Eighteenth Century.*

The eighteenth century is remarkable for what we might term tidiness of mind. The Renaissance had aroused the spirit of curiosity and inventiveness, which, when applied to literature, had produced a medley of new forms and modes of thought. Shakespeare, with a splendid gesture, had brushed aside the traditional Unities of Classical Drama, and the world has long since ceased to regret his temerity. In breaking down a tradition genius sets up another in its place. Other men claim for themselves a liberty which is sometimes not justified by their achievements, and the so-called Metaphysical Poets of the seventeenth century spun such a veil of remote imagery round their themes that even the simplest feelings of the heart seemed bewildering and unfamiliar. The inevitable reaction came in the eighteenth century. Men grew tired and suspicious of this "unchartered freedom," and asked for some authoritative standards by which their works could be measured. And what better standards could be found, so they argued, than the works of Homer, Virgil, Horace, and the great dramatists of antiquity? The poetic practices of the preceding age were condemned. France, which had taken the place of Italy as the glass of fashion and the arbiter of taste, gave us a lead. The classical unities were restored to favour. Even the plays of Shakespeare were put through the classical mincer and served up afresh in the neatly segmented patties of John Dryden. A generation of poets committed their thoughts to the Heroic Couplet, and lyric measures languished. It is significant that the paramount poet of this century, Pope, is represented by one poem only in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and even that was composed during his boyhood. It was the "humour" of the eighteenth century to distrust imagination, emotion, deep probing into the mystery of life, in fact, the veritable essence of lyric



poetry. Men set their faith on the processes of reason and cultivated "poise." Humour gave place to wit, and studied nattiness of expression succeeded the splendid verbal gestures of the great Elizabethans. The witchery of phrase which almost takes away our breath when we meet it in Shakespeare and his contemporaries has disappeared. In its place we find the controlled and polished art of Pope and his followers, in which the craftsman's hand is everywhere visible. In other words, art has degenerated into artifice. So striking is the change that many lovers of poetry impatiently declare that Pope was not, indeed, a poet at all. The very medium in which the poet might work was artificially restricted. The supremacy of the Heroic Couplet and the recognition of a standard poetic vocabulary changed poetry from a glorious adventure into a routine. It was an age of "costume" poetry. Fit and style were severely scrutinized, and the familiar word bred contempt. That roguish parodist, Mr. J. C. Squire, has re-dressed for us Tennyson's *Break, Break, Break* in the style of the eighteenth century, and though, like all parodists, he exaggerates the mannerisms and extravagances of his victims, he is sufficiently near the mark to be called as a witness. A few lines from each will suffice.

"O well for the fisherman's boy  
That he shouts with his sister at play !  
O well for the sailor lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill ;  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still ! "

"See how the labour of the urgent oar  
Propels the barks and draws them to the shore.  
Hark ! from the margin of the azure bay  
The joyful cries of infants at their play

(The offspring of a piscatorial swain,  
His home the sands, his pasturage the main).

Yet none of these may soothe the mourning heart,  
Nor fond alleviation's sweets impart ;  
Nor may the pow'rs of infants that rejoice  
Restore the accents of a former voice,  
Nor the bright smiles of ocean's nymphs command  
The pleasing contact of a vanished hand."

Even the most honoured poets of the age were guilty of this unnatural diction. Gray makes the " busy housewife *ply her evening care*." In Thomson's *Winter* the little children peering out into the storm " demand their sire " while their mother airs for him before the fire his " vestments warm." It is only the soothing versification of Goldsmith that lulls our critical faculties when we meet with similar mannerisms in *The Deserted Village*.

Both Shakespeare and Ben Jonson had found in the affectations of their day a delightful subject for railery ; but the " humour " of Jacques is pardonable eccentricity compared with the deliberate pose of men who pretended to be more stirred by a new fashion in waistcoats than by a national victory or defeat. Deportment was detached from conduct and worshipped for its own sake, and the trivialities of " polite society " were more esteemed than the genuine points of good breeding to be found in every walk of life. Just as the Pistols of the early seventeenth century aped the learned jargon of their masters, so the flunkeys of periwiggery cultivated the mincing gait and supercilious speech of high life. As we might expect, life tended to centre in the great towns. A preference for country life was tolerated with an amused contempt. Cynicism was studiously cultivated, and, as versifying rivalled duelling as a polite accomplishment, men were as ready with their lampoons as they were with their swords : ink was spilt as freely as blood in unworthy causes.

The champion of the oppressed, the enemy of imposture, the political partisan, the man who smarted under



some real or imagined injury, the moralist who deplored the follies of his fellow-men, all found in satire an outlet for their thoughts. When honest indignation feeds the flame, passionate satire may hover over the brink of high poetry; but when its sole aim is to wound, no such claim can be made for it: as Addison says, it is as dangerous as arrows that fly in the dark. Between these two extremes is the polished verse of the man who, without either deep indignation or vulgar abuse, raises a laugh at the follies and vices of the time. The wonderful adaptability of the heroic couplet for these three types of satire will be appreciated if you dip here and there into the poetry of Dryden, Pope, and Goldsmith. You will at least find the experience diverting: you may find it much to your taste.

As the century advanced the moral outlook of the people changed. The scandalous licence which followed the Restoration found fewer practitioners. The man who still upheld the stern moral code of Puritanism was no longer an object of derision among the fashionable; if he voiced his convictions he was held guilty merely of an offence against good manners. Even the great preachers of the day avoided enthusiasm and appealed rather to the good sense and reason of their congregations than to their feelings. Furthermore, a large section of the middle classes had throughout clung quietly to

“ The homely beauty of the good old cause,

And pure religion breathing household laws.”

They were ready to support any appeal, whether logical or inspired, for greater decency and sobriety in our national life.

### *The Nineteenth Century.*

The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 directed the thoughts of the literary world to certain tendencies

which had been gathering force during the second half of the eighteenth century. The spirit of man is naturally curious, especially about those things which lie beyond the narrow limits of his experience. He cannot for long remain insensible to the wonder and mystery of life and nature. A starry night, moonlight over water, the cry of a snared hare, the glad looks of children, the sweet jangling of distant bells, the mystery of death—these things produce in him emotional disturbances in which the intellectual processes have no part. Fashions also, in literature as in dress and manners, are notoriously short-lived. In fact, no sooner did the ideals of the eighteenth century seem to be firmly established than there appeared here and there men who, while consciously conforming with the vogue of the time, were unconsciously working towards its overthrow. The gradual change of temper is strikingly illustrated by the poetic career of Thomas Gray. One of his first poetic efforts was the *Alliance of Education and Government*, which might have been written by Pope when he was "off form." Let me quote a few lines from it:

" This spacious animated scene survey  
From where the rolling orb, that gives the day,  
His sable sons with nearer course surrounds,  
To either pole, and life's remotest bounds.  
How rude so e'er th' exterior form we find,  
Howe'er Opinion tinge the varied mind,  
Alike to all the impartial Heaven  
The sparks of truth and happiness has given."

Here you see heroic couplet, poetic diction, "Opinion" with a capital "O," masquerading as a personification, and all the rest of the Popean apparatus. Soon after he gives us the *Elegy*, almost romantic in its note of brooding melancholy:

" The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."



Country scenes and the lives of the labouring poor are no longer unworthy themes for poetry :

“ Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke ;  
 How jocund did they drive their team afield !  
 How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke ! ”

He openly defends them against the disdain of smart society :

“ Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;  
 Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
 The short and simple annals of the poor.”

In *The Bard* he strikes a genuine lyric note :

“ Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,  
 Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,  
 Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,  
 Ye died amidst your dying country’s cries.”

In spite of his “ poetic diction ” and artificial personifications, the change in spirit is momentous. *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin* take us back to the dim past which was to become a favourite background for the poetry of the succeeding generation. Thus we see in Gray a typical poet of the eighteenth century in the process of conversion. A similar transformation is noticeably going on in Goldsmith’s *Deserted Village*. The heroic couplet is still there, with frequent personifications and disquisitions on social problems expressed in “ poetic diction.” But mention of *The Deserted Village* calls up in your mind and in mine not the social and political economy but the tender memories of the poet’s boyhood—innocent mischief on the village green, the parson (no other poet, not even Chaucer, has given us a more sympathetic portrait), the unforgettable schoolmaster, the grey-beard gossips at the cosy

inn. Every scene, every figure, is aglow with love-light from the poet's eyes. But see the change for yourselves. First the social economist and reformer :

" Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey  
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,  
'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand  
Between a splendid and a happy land.  
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,  
And shouting Folly hails them from her shore ;  
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,  
And rich men flock from all the world around.  
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name  
That leaves our useful products still the same.  
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride  
Takes up a space that many poor supplied ;  
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,  
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds ;  
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken cloth  
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth ;  
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,  
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green ;  
Around the world each needful product flies,  
For all the luxuries the world supplies :  
While thus the land, adorned for pleasure all,  
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall."

Now the poet :

" Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,  
And still where many a garden flower grows wild ;  
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,  
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.  
A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich with forty pounds a year ;  
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, or wished to change his place ;  
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,  
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour ;  
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,  
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.  
His house was known to all the vagrant train,  
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain ;  
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,



Whose beard descending swept his aged breast ;  
 The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allow'd ;  
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
 Sat by his fire, and talked the night away ;  
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,  
 Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.  
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,  
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;  
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,  
 His pity gave ere charity began."

That poets were finding the heroic couplet monotonous and the general restraint of the age equally tiresome is proved by their renewed interest in blank verse and in the works of the great Elizabethans. There were even misguided people about who professed a passion for mediæval ballads which were as lacking in polish as they were extravagant in conception. Before the end of the century a Scottish peasant who had never heard of the contending theories of poetry was filling a rough notebook with verses like this :

" O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,  
     Wha for thy sake wad gladly die ?  
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,  
     Whose only faut is loving thee ?  
 If love for love thou wilt na gie,  
     At least be pity to me shown !  
 A thought ungentle canna be  
     The thought o' Mary Morison."

And Dr. Johnson, the bulwark of the established order, was but two years in his grave !

The reaction against the Age of Reason steadily grew, and by the end of the century a new era in poetry had obviously begun. The influence of individual poets like Thomson, Cowper, Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge in the formative stage of this poetic revolution must be studied elsewhere. The effects of the revolution must now be considered.

1. The couplet of Pope was abandoned and experiments in metrical and stanza form generally renewed.

2. There was a revived interest in the picturesque and in simple life in natural surroundings.

3. With a restored faith in inspiration poets demanded the removal of artificial restrictions and conventions. They claimed that even the commonest words could, by association, assume poetic value. This was no new claim, of course ; such words, startling in their unexpected beauty, waylay one in the poetry of the Elizabethans.

4. A revived interest in ancient ballads and mediæval story produced a love of the mysterious, the fantastic, and the supernatural. This aspect of the revolution has been called the "Renaissance of Wonder."

5. Attempts were made by introspective, intuitive, and emotional processes to pierce the veil which hides the mystery of life and death. What the eighteenth century thought it had achieved by the intellect, the nineteenth century strove to achieve through the feelings and inspiration.

Even the most casual comparison of the poetry of the two schools will convince you of the enormous changes that had been taking place. Read this passage from Pope's translation of Homer :

"The troops exulting sat in order round,  
And beaming fires illumined all the ground,  
As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,  
O'er heaven's pure azure spread her sacred light,  
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,  
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene ;  
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,  
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,  
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,  
And tip with silver every mountain's head :  
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,  
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies ;  
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,  
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light."



In Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes* the Muse appears in a different mood, but she has not changed her dress.

"Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find ?  
Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind ?  
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,  
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate ?  
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,  
No cries invoke the mercies of the skies ?  
Inquirer, cease ; petitions yet remain  
Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem Religion vain,  
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.  
Safe in His pow'r, whose eyes discern afar  
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r ;  
Implore His aid, in His decisions rest,  
Secure, whate'er He gives, He gives the best."

We have room for only a few random snatches of the new music. Further comment should be unnecessary.

"Verse, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,  
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—  
Both were mine ! Life went a-maying,  
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,  
When I was young !  
When I was young ?—Ah, woeful when !  
Ah ! for the change 'twixt Now and Then !  
This breathing house not built with hands,  
This body that does me grievous wrong,  
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,  
How lightly then it flashed along :—  
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,  
On winding lakes and rivers wide,  
That ask no aid of sail or oar,  
That fear no spite of wind or tide !  
Nought cared this body for wind or weather  
When Youth and I lived in't together."

COLERIDGE.

"No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands

Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands :  
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?—  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago :  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day ?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again ? ”

WORDSWORTH.

“ I met a lady in the meads  
Full beautiful, a faery's child ;  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long ;  
For sideways would she lean, and sing  
A faery's song.”

KEATS.

“ On a poet's lips I slept  
Dreaming like a love-adept  
In the sound his breathing kept ;  
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
But feeds on the aerial kisses  
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.  
He will watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;  
But from these create he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality !  
One of these awakened me,  
And I sped to succour thee.”

SHELLEY.



“ Bring me my bow of burning gold !  
 Bring me my arrows of desire !  
 Bring me my spear : O clouds unfold !  
 Bring me my chariot of fire !

I will not cease from mental fight,  
 Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
 Till we have built Jerusalem  
 In England's green and pleasant land.”

BLAKE.

“ A damsel with a dulcimer  
 In a vision once I saw :  
 It was an Abyssinian maid,  
 And on her dulcimer she played,  
 Singing of Mount Abora.  
 Could I revive within me  
 Her symphony and song,  
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me  
 That with music loud and long,  
 I would build that dome in air,  
 That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !  
 And all who heard should see them there,  
 And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !  
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair !  
 Weave a circle round him thrice,  
 And close your eyes with holy dread,  
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

COLERIDGE.

Opposition to the new tendencies did not die with Johnson. One of the last of the “ Die-hards ” was Lord Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. “ Poetry,” he wrote, “ has this much in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question.” He lived long enough to realize that inspired writers of any age are a law unto themselves.

It is difficult for us at this distance to measure the effect of the French Revolution on Englishmen of the

time. It was the staple of men's talk, and formed the background of much of our literature. In politics and poetry alike there was an impatience of tradition and a craving for freedom of life and thought.

“ Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven.”

It seems to be a law of life that every great ideal has within it

“ Something twin-born, the author of its perishing.”

The excesses of the Revolutionaries in France set going the inevitable reaction, and the literature of the later revolutionary period voices the general disappointment and disillusion, so that even the poet who found it bliss to be alive in the dawn of the Revolution became a staunch champion of the established order. Without some knowledge of the progress of the Revolution it is impossible to understand Byron's cynical reflections on human nature, or Shelley's burning indignation, somewhat allayed, it will be found, by his hope in human progress. Of the greater poets Keats alone was able to disregard the political ferment of the time. He unblushingly fled from the turmoil and sought refuge in the realms of Greek and mediæval story, where social and political strife had no existence.

The ideas sown by the Revolution had taken too deep a hold to be effectively uprooted. Throughout the nineteenth century the spirit of reaction fought a losing battle with the spirit of democracy. The spoils of war are seen in the Reform Laws, the Factory Acts, Trade Union legislation, the widening of the franchise, the spread of educational opportunities, and the rapid growth of humane feeling. As the century advanced writer after writer employed his gifts in the cause of



human betterment. The feudal conception of society practically disappeared. A similar levelling process was at work in poetry, and the cotter's pots and pans claimed the recognition in literature that had been allowed to the cotter in the political sphere. When Burns had written :

“ The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd for a' that,”

his words had had the appeal of originality ; they now appealed through their truth. There were times when progress seemed to the majority of people dangerously rapid. At such times Conservative governments could always count on a spell of office, which generally came to an end when their usefulness had disappeared. And so the poet claimed for us

“ A land of just and old renown,  
Where freedom slowly broadens down  
From precedent to precedent.”

The progress of science since the dawn of the nineteenth century has been so amazingly rapid that it is impossible for the ordinary mind to follow it all. Moreover, the practical application of science to means of communication and transport speeded up the progress of democracy by removing barriers between races and classes. Science also invaded the province of religious speculation. At no time in our history had the foundations of religious faith been so severely tested. Shelley, spiritually minded as he was, proclaimed himself an atheist, and Robert Owen, whose heart burned with love towards his fellow-men, avowed that in his fight against the evils of our social order religion was his most dangerous enemy.

In spiritual matters, where scientific proof is unobtainable, it is easier to attack than to defend, and it says much for the instinctive faith of our people in a

divine order that the Christian religion withstood the massed assaults of some of the most formidable minds of this or any age. In this battle the poets played no unworthy part. Tennyson, the Brownings, Matthew Arnold, Kingsley and the rest kept constantly before the British public the eternal value of spiritual things. It was the reaction against the materialistic view of life that led no doubt to the Catholic Revival, and thus strengthened the already existing literary links with the past. It is difficult not to associate with this movement the revived interest in the Middle Ages—the harvest time of the Catholic Church—as well as other manifestations of the Romantic spirit. “The Catholic Reaction,” says Professor Walker, “is an integral part, or an aspect, of the great Romantic Revival. Both rest in the last resort on the sense of mystery surrounding human life; both are irreconcilably opposed to the spirit which regards the universe as explainable, or which would dismiss as outside our sphere that in it which cannot be explained. On the contrary, it is just the inexplicable which is important; nothing worth proving can be proved.”

“Oh God! what are we? Do we then  
Form part of this material scene?  
Can thirty thousand thinking men  
Fall—and but leave the fields more green?”

The poetry of the nineteenth century is “so full of a number of things” that anything but a running commentary is impossible here. The influence of the French Revolution should be studied in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron. In Scott, Keats, Coleridge, and, later, Swinburne and Morris, you will find the glamour of mediævalism. Look to Brown-  
ing and Arnold for philosophy and criticism, and to Keats, Swinburne, and Morris for links with classical legend. You will probably find that Tennyson, if he



is not the greatest poet of his age, is in many respects the most representative.

### *The Present Age.*

Your reading of this short account of the progress of poetry in England has been cursory indeed if you have not noticed that every age is in effect a protest against its predecessor. Ideas which are stimulating so long as they are fresh often become stale and unprofitable from long familiarity, and the true artist, as Mr. Binyon says, "wants to work free of all that is dead or half-alive, encumbering or enfeebling his expression with matter or form that is second-hand and not made his own, or accepted without faith from a former time's prestige." Before the last of the great Victorians passed to his rest a change of temper, of mood, and of vision was already taking place. The dull uniformity of modern industry which sacrificed interest to efficiency and production was enough in itself to make men ask whether

"All's right with the world,"

and whether, indeed,

"somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill."

The wonder of mechanical contrivances was passing, and it was realized that all these "improvements" were leading men farther and farther away from natural conditions. To vast numbers of people the moon and stars had ceased to be necessary, and the hardiness born of exposure and battles with the elements was becoming less and less a national characteristic. It was against this mode of life that Stevenson rebelled :

"Give to me the life I love,  
Let the love go by me.

Give the jolly heaven above  
And the byway nigh me.  
Bed in the bush with stars to see,  
Bread I dip in the river—  
There's the life for a man like me,  
There's the life for ever."

And Masefield :

" I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gipsy  
life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way, where the wind's  
like a whetted knife,  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow  
rover,  
And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long  
trick's over."

And Gerald Gould :

" Beyond the East the Sunrise : beyond the West the  
sea ;  
And East and West the Wander-Thirst that will not  
let me be ;  
It works in me like madness to bid me say good-bye,  
For the seas call, and the stars call, and oh ! the call of  
the sky ! "

And Newbolt :

" Over the downs in sunlight clear  
Forth we went in the spring of the year :  
Plunder of April's gold we sought,  
Little of April's anger thought.

Caught in a copse without defence  
Low we crouched to the rain-squall dense :  
Sure if misery man can vex,  
There it beat on our bended necks.

. . . . .

Yet when again we wander on  
Suddenly all that gloom is gone :



Under and over through the wood,  
Life is astir, and life is good.

Well is it seen that every one  
Laughs at the rain and loves the sun ;  
We too laughed with the wildwood crew,  
Laughed till the sky once more was blue.

Homeward over the downs we went  
Soaked to the heart with sweet content ;  
April's anger is swift to fall,  
April's wonder is worth it all."

It is surprising that War, which arouses the fiercest passions of man, should in the past have inspired so little poetry of the highest quality. What great poetry, for example, was produced by the Hundred Years' War, the Wars of the Roses, the Civil War of the seventeenth century, the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, and, nearer our own times, the Boer War? Compared with the poetry composed on other themes during these periods the war poetry is conspicuously slight in volume and, with few exceptions, poor in quality. Certainly none of our greatest poets, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and the rest found in war a ready source of inspiration. The Great European War of 1914-18, curiously enough, produced a considerable amount of poetry of notable merit. One reason may be that owing to the vast numbers engaged, more men with the gift of poetry saw the horrors and heroism of war face to face. Again, this latest and greatest of cataclysms raised moral and spiritual issues which were only too often absent from earlier conflicts.

We are too near the poetry of to-day to see its lineaments aright. It is possible that in imaginative quality it lags behind the poetry of the last century. In the poetry of fancy, however, it is very rich. It is lacking neither in courage nor originality. The extra-

ordinary nature of the experiments now taking place in form, metre, and range of themes seems to suggest that poetry is at present in a state of transition, and it is difficult to say whither it is tending.

“ I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still ;  
If less divinely frenzied than of yore ;  
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill  
To simulate emotion felt no more.”

Thus one of the older school of the new age. Between poets like Sir William Watson, who rarely wanders from the broad path of tradition, and anarchical spirits like Miss Stein, there is indeed a great gulf fixed. Go to the Tate Gallery, and you will see an equally impassable gulf between the art of Constable and the art of Van Gogh. It is not difficult to picture, as you read the following lines by Watson, the long well-trod road of verse leading back into the mists that hide the form of John Milton, whose sightless eyes gaze farther back along the same road which had echoed to the tread of the great Mantuan :

“ In sad, stern verse the rugged scholar-sage  
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.  
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,  
But 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,  
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day,  
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,  
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.”

No Muse that Milton ever knew inspired the following numbers of Miss Stein :

“ A soap, a whole soap, any piece of a whole soap, more whole soap, and not mistily, all this is no outrage and no blessing. A precious thing is an oily thing. In that there is no sugar and silence.

“ The thread, the thread, the thread is the language of yesterday, it is the resolution of to-day, it is no pain.



“ Pin in and pin in and point clear and point where. Breakfast, breakfast is the arrangement that beggars corn, that shows the habit of fishes, that powders aches and stumblings, and any useful thing. The way to say it, is to say it.”

A modern critic (himself a poet of undoubted merit) confesses that he has a great respect for the *sincerity* of this work. I am more than puzzled. I feel like Sebastian :

“ What relish is in this ? how runs the stream ?  
Or I am mad, or else this is a dream,”

and I

“ wrangle with my reason that persuades me  
To any other trust but that I am mad,  
Or else the lady's mad.”

Watson and this American lady are at opposite poetic poles. Between them you will find at varying degrees of longitude and latitude the poets who really represent the modern age. Of such infinite variety is their work that a classification is of little use, even if it were possible. Those of you who love to group poets in their several “ schools ” will understand what I mean when they are faced with such names as Kipling, Francis Thompson, Wilfred Gibson, Walter de la Mare, John Masefield, the Sitwells, James Elroy Flecker, Robert Graves, Robert Bridges, Sir Henry Newbolt, Alfred Noyes, Mrs. Meynell, Humbert Wolfe, and Herbert Trench, to mention only a few.

“ It is idle to proclaim,” says Mr. Binyon, “ that poetry should express the spirit of the age. It does that whether consciously or unconsciously ; it can't help it. The only relevance to poetry of changes in our daily existence is the change they cause in our interior attitude to the universe, in the life of the human spirit. That we are over-busy with the surface of life is no reason for poetry and art to reflect that

fever and bustle ; rather should they embody, passionately embody, the interior, the imaginative life. The spirit of art is against the spirit of the age. Perhaps it has always been so, however much we idealize certain favoured periods in the past. Certainly we know that it is so now. We express our own age by resisting it, by creating something which will outlast its fevers and its disillusiones."

The reaction against metre in modern poetry is only another symptom of the dissatisfaction with things as they are. The movement towards " free verse " is, of course, no new thing. The experiments of Matthew Arnold, Henley, Walt Whitman and others occur readily to the mind. Both Arnold and Henley, while discarding rhyme and fixed length of line in the specific poems I have in mind, retained the principle of regularity in the rhythm. Whitman, especially in his uninspired moments, careers along not only without any regular beat, but, what is worse, without any expectation of it. The result is that at times his work has neither the rhythmic qualities of poetry nor the logical arrangement of prose. It is only when he is at his best that his emotion creates a natural rhythm of its own which approximates to poetic movement. Is it possible that the craze for free verse is due to loose thinking ? The very existence of formal rules challenges the poet to invent endless variations within these rules. When there are no rules the only reaction possible is one towards some general uniformity which may lapse into monotony. " Free verse," says Mr. Binyon, " has, no doubt, its own future, but its scope, I think, will never be otherwise than very restricted, both because it is only suited for certain moods and certain matter, still more because, to write successfully without metre needs stronger inspiration, more mastery of rhythm, and a severer sense of form, not less discipline but a greater discipline, than to write in metre."



Time, that infallible judge, will see that the best work of our generation is preserved, however strange and bewildering it may appear to-day. Past experience leads us to conclude that the immortal garland will go only to those who, amid all the changing scenes of life, address themselves with all the force and sincerity that is in them to the eternal problem of man's place in the universe. In the meantime it is useful to know with what feelings reputable critics have received the new poetry. This is how it affected the late Professor Churton Collins :

" If a man six feet high, of striking masculine beauty and of venerable appearance, chooses to stand on his head in the public streets . . . he will at least attract attention, and create some excitement ; secondly, . . . the law of reaction in literature, as in everything else, will assert itself, that when poetry has long attained perfection in form and has been running smoothly in conventional grooves, there is certain to be a revolt both on the part of poets themselves and in the public taste, and the opposite extreme will be affected and welcomed ; and thirdly, . . . if a writer has the courage or impudence to set sense, taste, and decency at defiance, and, posing sometimes as a mystic and sometimes as a mountebank, to express himself in the jargon of both, and yet has the genius to irradiate his absurdities with flashes of wisdom, beauty, and inspired insight, three things are certain to result, . . . namely, sympathy from those who favour the reaction, disgust on the part of the ' conservatives,' and perplexity on the part of those who belong to neither party, but who are quite willing to judge what they find on its own merits."

For the frankly modernist view we turn to Mr. Robert Graves, who says :

" Poetry has, in a word, begun to ' go round the corner ' ; the straight street in which English bards have for centuries walked is no longer so attractive, now that a concealed turning has been found opening up a new street or network of streets whose existence tradition

hardly suspected. Traditionalists will even say of the adventurers : ' They have completely disappeared ; they are walking in the suburbs of poetry called alternatively Nonsense or Madness.' But it disturbs these traditionalists that the defections from the highway are numerous, and that the poets concerned cannot be accused of ignorance of the old ways, of mental unbalance in other departments of life, or of insincerity. As a well-dyed traditionalist once myself, I can recall my anger and impatience when reading advanced verse which seemed to me utterly unlovely and meaningless ; anger and impatience still occasionally arise in me when I read, but for a different reason ; I dislike poetry which, while discarding the old usages, does not make effective use of the new methods at its disposal ; and I would be the last to deny that in the present transitional and experimental stage there are writers who have attempted to get notoriety by innovations and obscurities in which they do not themselves believe ; but I do not believe that they are very numerous."

One must agree with Mr. Graves when he says that expressions like " clucking flowers " and " shrill grass " make severe demands upon the reader ; but it is questionable whether we should argue from this that " one of the greatest weaknesses of traditional verse " is " the theory that the poet should do all the work and spoon-feed his reader." I mention the " clucking flowers " because Mr. Graves praises the expression as a healthy symptom of the new manner. But if there is any real affinity between beauty and truth there is surely more poetry in the " alien corn " of a traditionalist like Keats than in the modernist's idea of flowers " bent down so that they seem like hens clucking " !

We will conclude with some wise words from Mr. Edmund Gosse :

" This inveterate passion for modern actions and current movements has one result which presents both a ludicrous and a dangerous face. It leads directly to the



proposition that all previous literature should be scrapped, as mechanics say, and that we should begin the whole thing over again. All our great forefathers, from Homer down to Tennyson, are mouldering tombstones in one vast, uniform cemetery. Let us plough it up, scatter the bones and epitaphs, and build useful edifices—picture theatres or iron foundries or railway stations—on the site. . . . The spirit of the present generation is in a marked degree anti-traditional, and it would be easy, but tiresome, to show by copious quotation how welcome the spirit of revolt has become. . . . When I was young, it was the fashion to say that Pope was not a poet, and that an acquaintance with his work was useless. His value as a link in the chain is now admitted, and we can as little afford to lose sight of Pope as we can of Marlowe or of Keats. It is now the fashion, among some of the younger sanhedrim, to eject Milton from respectful consideration, and as for Tennyson, the self-respecting Georgian critic would blush to admit that he had a copy of Tennyson in the house. All this is very childish, and it is a reversion to the barbarous days when want of knowledge made pardonable an ignorance which is now nothing better than a presumptuous affectation. The tendency of one age to break with the tradition of the age which immediately preceded it is quite another thing. This appears to be an inevitable result of growth, which insists on change. You will observe, if you take a wide view of literary history, that its periods do not often continue one another. On the contrary, they rise out of a rupture with the immediate past, and it is, of course, a commonplace of criticism that in European literature, viewed broadly, the streams of inspiration have commonly invaded the art of writing from other countries, and have not descended down native lines. But this—though it leads to a sudden depreciation, as we find Dryden deaf to the music of the Elizabethans, and Wordsworth fanatically anxious to destroy the prestige of the eighteenth century—this is only a temporary injustice. The new faith itself becomes old, and is rejected in favour of a still newer religion, under whose auspices the old gods come back into their proper perspectives. . . . The Literature of Europe is an immense stretch of a country which retains, and will always retain, its individual and relative

characteristics, its streams flowing through champaigns, its hills lifted, by slow degrees, out of the surrounding plains. But although it is the same country, the sky above it shifts incessantly, and the taste of successive generations looks at it under different lights. Now all seems dim ; but a wind of doctrine arises, and the white spires of genius are once more illuminated ; the sun catches the surface of a lake which we had missed, and clouds obscure a field that to our fathers seemed luminous. These are the effect of conditions of life upon literature, but literature itself remains unchanged, and disinterested historical curiosity will continue to reveal its perennial power and charm."

## EXERCISES

1. Of the two poems given below, which are found side by side in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, Mr. Chesterton writes : " Their juxtaposition represents one vast revolution in the poetical manner of looking at things. . . . A man might read those two poems a great many times without happening to realize that they are two poems on exactly the same subject—the subject of a trusting woman deserted by a man. And the whole difference . . . is this fundamental difference, that Goldsmith's words are spoken about a certain situation, and Burns's words are spoken in that situation. . . . In the transition from one of these lyrics to the other, we have a vital change in the conception of the functions of the poet, a change of which Burns was in many ways the beginning." Analyse this interesting piece of criticism.

" When lovely woman stoops to folly  
And finds too late that men betray—  
What charm can soothe her melancholy,  
What art can wash her guilt away ?

The only art her guilt to cover,  
To hide her shame from every eye,  
To give repentance to her lover  
And wring his bosom, is—to die."

GOLDSMITH.



“ Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,  
 How can ye blume sae fair !  
 How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
 And I sae fu’ o’ care !

Thou’ll break my heart, thou bonnie bird  
 That sings upon the bough ;  
 Thou minds me o’ the happy days  
 When my fause Luve was true.

Thou’ll break my heart, thou bonnie bird  
 That sings beside thy mate ;  
 For sae I sat, and sae I sang,  
 And wist na o’ my fate.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon  
 To see the woodbine twine,  
 And ilka bird sang o’ its love,  
 And sae did I o’ mine.

Wi’ lightsome heart I pu’d a rose,  
 Frae aff its thorny tree ;  
 And my fause luvver staw the rose,  
 But left the thorn wi’ me.”

BURNS.

2. What literary affinities has Wordsworth with Cowper, Burns, and Milton ?
3. Contrast the literary revolutions that accompanied the political changes of 1660 and 1789.
4. What did Wordsworth’s poetry gain and lose from his views on the vocabulary of poetry ?
5. Why was Wordsworth’s attitude towards the poetry of the eighteenth century so hostile ?
6. What did the poetry of Keats gain or lose from his studied disregard of the political and social problems of his time ?
7. “ Shelley lived in two worlds. . . . One was the world of Mankind and its hopes, the other the world of his own heart.” Illustrate this.
8. Each of the following passages is characteristic of the age in which it was written. Try to assign them to their respective periods and give your reasons for so “ placing ” them.

(a) " Let us (since life can little more supply  
Than just to look about us and to die)  
Expatiate free o'er all the scene of Man,  
A mighty maze ! but not without a plan ; . . .  
Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,  
And catch the manners living as they rise ;  
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can ;  
And vindicate the ways of God to Man."

(b) " As I was walking mine alane  
Atween a water and a wa',  
There I espied a wee wee man,  
And he was the least that e'er I saw.

His legs were scant a shathmont's length,  
And thick and thimber was his thie ;  
Atween his brows there was a span,  
And atween his shoulders there was three."

(c) " Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross  
from shore to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and  
west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south  
and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small ;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross,  
the sun half an hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred  
years hence, others will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-  
tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide."

(d) " My Phyllis hath the morning Sun,  
At first to look upon her ;  
And Phyllis hath morn-waking birds,  
Her rising still to honour.  
My Phyllis hath prime-feathered flowers,  
That smile when she treads on them ;  
And Phyllis hath a gallant flock  
That leaps since she doth own them.  
But Phyllis hath too hard a heart,  
Alas, that she should have it ! "



- (e) " Now came still Evening on, and Twilight grey  
 Had in her sober livery all things clad ;  
 Silence accompanied ; for beast and bird,  
 They to their grassy couch, these to their nests  
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale ;  
 She all night long her amorous descant sung :  
 Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament  
 With living sapphires ; Hesperus, that led  
 The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,  
 Rising in clouded majesty, at length  
 Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,  
 And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."
- (f) " This litel child his litel book lerninge,  
 As he sat in the scole at his prymer,  
 He *Alma redemptoris* herde singe,  
 As children lerned hir antiphoner ;  
 And, as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,  
 And herkned ay the wordes and the note,  
 Til he the firste vers coude al by rote."
- (g) " Reflective, but with never a thought,  
 The parrot sways upon his ivory perch—  
 Then gravely turns a somersault  
 Through rings nailed in the roof—  
 Much as the sun performs his antics  
 As he climbs the aerial bridge  
 We only see  
 Through crystal prisms in a falling rain."
- (h) " One day nigh wearie of the yrksome way,  
 From her unhastie beast she did alight,  
 And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay  
 In secret shadow, farre from all men's sight :  
 From her fayre head her fillet she undight,  
 And layd her stole aside. Her angel's face  
 As the great eye of heaven shyned bright ;  
 And made a sunshine in the shadie place ;  
 Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace."
- (i) " Enlarge my mind with multitude of days !  
 In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays :

Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know,  
 That life protracted is protracted woe.  
 Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,  
 And shuts up all the passages of joy :  
 In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,  
 The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flow'r ;  
 With listless eyes the dotard views the store,  
 He views, and wonders that they please no more."

(j) " Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and  
 day  
 The old ships draw to home again, the young ships  
 sail away ;  
 And come I may, but go I must, and if men ask you  
 why,  
 You may put the blame on the stars and the sun, and  
 the white road and the sky."

(k) " I was weori of wandringe,  
 And went me to reste  
 Undur a brod banke  
 Bi a bourne syde ;  
 And as I lay and leonede  
 And lokede on the watres,  
 I slumberede in a slepynge  
 Hit sownede so murie."

(l) " The birds around me hopped and played,  
 Their thoughts I cannot measure :  
 But the least motion which they made,  
 It seemes a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
 To catch the breezy air ;  
 And I must think, do all I can,  
 That there was pleasure there."

(m) " But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
 Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !  
 A savage place ! as holy and enchanted  
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
 By woman wailing for her demon lover ! "



## CHAPTER VI

### EARLY DRAMA IN ENGLAND

#### *The Beginnings.*

The problem of religious instruction in early Norman times was one of considerable difficulty in England, especially among the native population. The services were conducted entirely in Latin, a language with which the English had at most a nodding acquaintance. It was natural, therefore, that the mere ceremonies of worship, however beautiful, should through long familiarity tend to lose their appeal. The difficulty was partly overcome by the production at certain seasons of short plays or "pageants," of which incidents in the life of Christ and the Saints and scenes from biblical history were the stock themes. Christmas would be celebrated by a Nativity Play. The manger would be placed in the chancel, and the herald angel in the pulpit. One door would admit the shepherds and another the three kings. The Easter congregation would witness a representation of Christ's Resurrection. Performances based on the events between Christmas and Easter were to be shaped later on into the Passion Play. These plays were given at first within the churches and performed by the clergy. Although spoken in Latin, they had this advantage over the ordinary liturgical services as purveyors of sacred knowledge, that they appealed to the eye—always a great advantage, but specially so in a rude age. Such a play was given at Dunstable early in the twelfth century in honour of St. Catherine: earlier examples, if they existed, have left no trace. We are

told by William Fitzstephen, who wrote the *Life of Thomas à Becket* during the last quarter of the same century, that plays representing the miracles and the agonies of holy martyrs were quite common in the London of his day. As a means of attracting worshippers there is no doubt they were a conspicuous success. Often the churches were too small for the "audiences," and the plays were given in the churchyards. By the time of Henry III. the dialogue was frequently delivered in English. Here, for example, is a short passage from a play which is believed to belong to that reign :

*Satan.* Who is that ich here thore ?  
 Ich him rede speke na more,  
 For he mai so michel do,  
 That he shal us come to,  
 For to ben oure fere  
 And fonden hou we pleien here.

*Dominus.* Wost thou never, what ich am ?  
 Almost the thridde winter is gan,  
 That thou havest fonded me  
 For to knowe, what I be ;  
 Sinne found thou never nan  
 In me, as in other man ;  
 And thou shalt wite well to-dai,  
 That mine will I have awei,  
 Whan thou belivest al thin one,  
 Thanne miht thou grete and grone.

*Satan.* Par ma fei ! ich holde mine  
 Alle tho, that ben her-inne ;  
 Resoun will I telle the,  
 Ther agen miht thou noht be.  
 Whoso biggeth ani thing,  
 It is his and his ofspring.  
 Adam hungri cam to me,  
 Manrede dide I him me do ;

*thore*, then.

*fonden*, find.

*knowe*, prove.

*belivest*, relinquishest.

*biggeth*, buyeth.

*rede*, advise.

*Wost*, knowest.

*wite*, know.

*fere*, companion.

*fonded*, tried.

*awei*, always.

*grete*, weep.

*Manrede*, homage.



For on appel ich gaf him,  
He is min and al his kin.

*Dominus.* Satanas, it wes min.

The appel, that thou gavest him,  
The appel and the appel-tre  
Both were maked thourh me.  
How mihtest thou on ani wise  
Of other mannes thing make marchandise ?  
Sithen he wes boht with min,  
With resoun wil ich haven him.

Mr. A. W. POLLARD'S *version*.

We cannot doubt that the simple directness of this native English speech must have reached hearts the mediæval Latin could not touch.

### *The Cycles.*

About this time the plays began to lose their strictly religious character. The laity began to take a hand ; performances were given in public places away from consecrated ground, " in weyes or grenes," and though the religious element still predominated there was a generous leavening of humorous episodes. Under the direction of the clergy the Trade Guilds carried the process a stage further. In certain towns, after many weeks of rehearsal by the " moste connyng, discrete, and able players," a Cycle of Mystery or Miracle Plays was produced, each Guild being responsible for the play best suited to the particular craft of its members. Thus the Carpenters or Shipwrights would produce the Noah Play, and a trio of Goldsmiths would make a goodly show as the Three Kings. On the appointed day or days the various groups of players assembled at separate points or " stations," each group with its own horse-drawn pageant-wagon on which the play was to be given. All the plays began at the same time in different quarters of the town, and at a given signal moved on and were repeated at fresh points on the route. The procedure followed at Chester is thus

quaintly described : " They began first at the abay gates, and when the first pageante was played, it was wheeled to the highe crosse before the mayor, and soe every streete had a pageante playing before them at one time, till all the pageantes for the daye appointed were played." Nearly fifty separate plays have survived from the York Cycle alone. Competition among the Guilds stimulated invention, especially in the " text," and weird and wonderful were the liberties taken with the Scripture narrative. Some of the interpolations have the true spirit of comedy ; witness the famous scene between Noah and his termagant spouse when she refuses to come aboard :

*Noah.* Wif, com in : why standes thou there ?  
Thou art ever forward, I dar well swere ;  
Com in, on Goddes halfe ! time it were,  
For fere lest that we drowne.

*Noah's Wife.* Yea, sir, sette up your saile,  
And rowe forth with evil haile,  
For withouten any faile  
I will not out of this towne.  
But I have my gossippes everychon,  
One foot further I will not gon ;  
They shall not drowne, by Sante John !  
And I may save ther life.  
They loven me full well, by Christe !  
But thou lette them in thy chiste,  
Elles rowe nowe wher thee liste,  
And gette thee a new wife.

*Noah.* Shem, sonne, lo ! thy mother is wrawe.  
Forsooth swich another I do not knawe.

*Shem.* Father, I shall fet her in, I trawe,  
Withouten any faile.  
Mother, my father after thee sende,  
And biddes thee into yonder ship wende,  
Loke up and see the winde,  
For we bene ready to saile.

*Noah's Wife.* Shem, go again to him, I saye,  
I will not come therin to daye.

*Noah.* Com in, wife, in twenty devills way !  
Or elles stand ther withoute.



*Ham.* Shall we all fett her in ?

*Noah.* Yea, sonnes, in Christs blessing and mine !  
I wolde you hied you betime,  
For of this flood I doubte.

*Japhet.* Mother, we praye you all togeder,  
For we are here your owne childer,  
Com into the ship for fere of the wedder,  
For his love that you boughte.

*Noah's Wife.* That will not I, for all your call,  
But I have my gossippes all.

*Shem.* In faith, mother, yet you shall,  
Whether thou wilt or not.

*[They force her in.]*

*Noah.* Welcom, wife, into this bote.

*Noah's Wife.* Have thou that for thy note.

*[Strikes him.]*

*Noah.* A ha ! Mary, this is hote,  
It is good to be still.  
A ! children, me-thinkes my bote remeves,  
Oure tarying here heighly me greves.  
Over the land the water spredes ;  
God do as he will.

He was a merry wag who first called Noah's Ark a chest ! How Dan Chaucer, who knew this scene, must have chuckled over it !

The best of all the Mysteries, judged by literary standards, was the Second Shepherds' Play, one of the thirty-two mysteries forming the Towneley Cycle which dates from the middle of the fourteenth century. The MS. which has survived is later by about a hundred years. This play contains the celebrated sheep-stealing episode—as fine a piece of comedy as any one could wish—and introduces to us that delightful gossip, Mak's wife. When the shepherds enter Mak's house to search for a lost sheep which they believe Mak to have stolen, they find his wife abed “with child” (the child being the stolen sheep). Her bland assurance with its delicious irony must have raised a chorus of guffaws.

" I vow to God so mild,  
 If ever I you beguiled,  
 That I will eat this child  
 That lies in this cradle."

The play ends with the visit of the Three Shepherds to the Infant Jesus.

(They enter the stable and adore the infant Saviour.)

*Primus Pastor.* Hail, thou comely and clean one ! Hail,  
 young Child !

Hail, Maker, as I mean, from a maiden  
 so mild !

Thou hast harried, I ween, the warlock  
 so wild,—

The false beguiler with his teen now goes  
 beguiled.

Lo, he merries,

Lo, he laughs, my sweeting !

A happy meeting !

Here's my promised greeting,—

Have a bob of cherries !

*Secundus Pastor.* Hail, sovereign Saviour, for thou hast  
 us sought !

Hail, noble nursling and flower, that all  
 things hast wrought !

Hail, thou, full of gracious power, that  
 made all from nought !

Hail, I kneel and cower ! A bird have  
 I brought

To my bairn from afar.

Hail, little tiny mop !

Of our creed thou art the crop,

I fain would drink in thy cup,

Little day-star !

*Tertius Pastor.* Hail, darling dear one, full of Godhead  
 indeed !

I pray thee be near, when I have need.

Hail, sweet is thy cheer ! My heart  
 would bleed

To see thee sit here in so poor a weed,  
 With no pennies.



Hail, put forth thy dall,  
I bring thee but a ball,  
Keep it, and play with it withal,  
And go to the tennis.

*Maria.* The Father of Heaven this night, God omnipotent,  
That setteth all things aright, his Son hath he sent.  
My name he named and did light on me ere that he went.  
I conceived him forthright through his might as he meant,  
And now he is born.  
May he keep you from woe !  
I shall pray him do so.  
Tell it, forth as ye go,  
And remember this morn.

The shepherds make their farewells and depart singing.

In this, as in other religious plays of the time, threads of English life and humour run through the sacred web of Palestine. The opening of the Second Shepherds' Play is as English as can be—complaints of the cold weather, chapped fingers, heavy taxes, and curses on harsh employers, and as the three shepherds raise their voices in song (tenor, treble, and mean) their accent is as broad as the shire that breeds them.

A few words now about the staging of these early plays. You know already that the stage was erected on movable platforms. It consisted of two stories, the lower one being used for dressing and properties. The upper one, the stage proper, had a grotesquely painted back-cloth with wing-pieces enclosing it on three sides. There were various mechanical devices such as pulleys and windlasses, and a miscellaneous assortment of scenic pieces made of painted wood or basket-work covered with painted cloths. One of the stock properties was Hell Mouth—an enormous face painted on canvas or wood with a prodigious nose, holes for eyes, and a large mouth with workable jaws

furnished with teeth. Flares were held behind the eyes, while the mouth, whenever open, revealed leaping flames and volumes of smoke through which devils with pitchforks whirled in satanic dance. Realistic thunder effects were produced by beating drums and turning barrels filled with stones.

The costumes were equally grotesque. Herod, a stock character, wore clothes and hat of divers colours, and red gloves, which were, of course, emblematic. Pontius Pilate usually wore a vivid green cloak which concealed an enormous club. The Devil's wardrobe included a horrible face-mask; this, we gather, came in for much ill-treatment.

The expenses of these productions were "defrayed by collections" in the streets, and sometimes by a levy on the members of the Trade Guilds. Occasionally the borough authorities accepted full financial responsibility. The Cycles were often a source of considerable profit to the town. They attracted large numbers of visitors, for whom the local traders, we may be sure, made the most careful preparations.

### *Morality Plays.*

By the middle of the fifteenth century the drama had acquired a definitely secular bias, and religion was becoming a mere traditional background or envelopment. Serious-minded people who were preoccupied with the gloomy problem of sin and its punishment looked to the Miracle and Mystery Plays for spiritual food and often came empty away. More congenial to their temper were the new Morality Plays, in which the chief characters represented the leading virtues and vices and other types and abstractions. The first regular play of this kind, dating from the reign of Henry VI., was called *The Castle of Perseverance*, and may be taken as typical. Its "plot," as summarized by Mr. A. W. Pollard, is as follows:



“ The play begins with a conference of the powers of ill, and then Humanum Genus (Mankind) comes forth as a new-born child to lament his lot. His Good and Bad Angels come to his side, and he follows the Bad, who brings him under the power of the World. Pleasure, Folly, and Backbiting, Belial and the Flesh, and all the seven sins, become his companions ; but his Good Angel brings Confession, Shrift, and Penitence to his rescue, and he is lodged in the Castle of Perseverance. A battle ensues between the Sins and the Virtues, and the latter are for the time victorious ; but Avaritia or Covetyse makes a fresh conquest of Mankind, and, amid his prayers to Misericordia (Mercy) and the gibes of the devils, his soul takes flight, to become the subject of a contention in Heaven between Mercy, Justice, Truth, and Peace, in which, with an appeal to Christ’s Passion, Mercy gains her cause.”

### *Interludes.*

Towards the close of the fifteenth century the custom arose of presenting plays indoors, either to while away the time before a banquet or to crown the feast at the end. The older plays, which often lasted from early morn to dewy eve, were impracticable, and a more compact type, called the Interlude, began to appear.

The audience being more “ select,” there was a corresponding seriousness about the fare provided, most of the plays being of an instructive or controversial nature. Political and religious debates, Science (the Renaissance was already making its influence felt), the fruits of Confession and Repentance, the vices of Youth—these and similar themes provided the after-dinner diversion of a considerable body of thoughtful people ; a fact to be considered by those who study the mental and spiritual outlook of those days. It must not be supposed that cheerfulness and humour were entirely banished from the stage. The Devil had been imported from the older Mysteries, and when the Vice, the forerunner of the Elizabethan clown, was invented, there grew up some stock comic business between the two. As with the Mysteries, the demoral-

ization of the Morality and the Interlude was only a matter of time. Some of the later Interludes were frankly satirical : in others the spirit of broad comedy diffused an atmosphere in which moral earnestness had no chance of surviving.

Of the "moral plays," perhaps *Everyman* is the best example. It claims to be "A treatyse how the hye fader of heven sendeth dethe to somon every creature to come and gyve acounte of theyr lyves in this worlde, and is in maner of a morall playe." *Everyman* is summoned by Death to render up his account to God. He asks each of his friends in turn to accompany him ; all refuse except Good Deeds, who, with the help of Knowledge, shows him how to win the ear of Confession, who absolves him. *Everyman's* encounter with Fellowship will give you an idea of the dialogue.

*Fellowship.* Everyman, good morrow by this day.  
Sir, why lookest thou so piteously ?  
If any thing be amiss, I pray thee, me say,  
That I may help to remedy.

*Everyman.* Yea, good Fellowship, yea,  
I am in great jeopardy.

*Fellowship.* My true friend, show to me your mind ;  
I will not forsake thee, unto my life's end,  
In the way of good company.

*Everyman.* That was well spoken, and lovingly.

*Fellowship.* Sir, I must needs know your heaviness ;  
I have pity to see you in any distress ;  
If any have you wronged ye shall revenged be,  
Though I on the ground be slain for thee,—  
Though that I know before that I should die.

*Everyman.* Verily, Fellowship, gramercy.

*Fellowship.* Tush ! by thy thanks I set not a straw.  
Show me your grief, and say no more.

*Everyman.* If I my heart to you should break,  
And then you turn your mind from me,  
And would not me comfort, when you hear  
me speak,

Then should I ten times sorrier be.

*Fellowship.* Sir, I say as I will do in deed.



- Everyman.* Then be you a good friend at need :  
I have found you true here before.
- Fellowship.* And so ye shall evermore ;  
For, in faith, and thou go to Hell,  
I will not forsake thee by the way !
- Everyman.* Ye speak like a good friend ; I believe you  
well ;  
I shall deserve it, and I may.
- Fellowship.* I speak of no deserving, by this day.  
For he that will say and nothing do  
Is not worthy with good company to go ;  
Therefore show me the grief of your mind,  
As to your friend most loving and kind.
- Everyman.* I shall show you how it is ;  
Commanded I am to go a journey,  
A long way, hard and dangerous,  
And give a strait count without delay  
Before the high judge Adonai.  
Wherefore I pray you, bear me company,  
As ye have promised, in this journey.
- Fellowship.* That is matter indeed ! Promise is duty,  
But, and I should take such a voyage on me,  
I know it well, it should be to my pain :  
Also it make me afeard, certain.  
But let us take counsel here as well as we can,  
For your words would fear a strong man.
- Everyman.* Why, ye said, if I had need,  
Ye would me never forsake, quick nor dead,  
Though it were to Hell truly.
- Fellowship.* So I said, certainly,  
But such pleasures be set aside, thee sooth to  
say :  
And also, if we took such a journey,  
When should we come again ?
- Everyman.* Nay, never again till the day of doom.
- Fellowship.* In faith, then will not I come there !  
Who hath you these tidings brought ?
- Everyman.* Indeed, Death was with me here.
- Fellowship.* Now, by God that all hath bought,  
If Death were the messenger,  
For no man that is living to-day  
I will not go that loath journey—  
Not for the father that begat me !

An educational bias is observable in the Interlude of the *Four Elements*, "A New Interlude and a mery," as it styles itself. It undertakes among other things to deal with the following "dyvers matters":

"Of the sytuacyon of the iiii elementes, that is to sey, the Yerth, the Water, the Ayre, and Fyre, and of their qualytise and propertise, and of the generacyon and corrupcyon of thynges made of the commyxtyon of them.

"Of certeyn conclusions provynge that the yerth must nedes be rounde, and that it hengyth in the myddes of the fyrmament, and that it is in circumference above xxi.m.myle.

"Of certeyn conclusions provynge that the see lyeth rounde uppon the yerth."

In the later vein of broad humour there is Heywood's *The four P.P.: a very mery enterlude of a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potecary, and a Pedlar*. The substance of the play is a competition between the first three as to which can tell the biggest lie, the Pedlar acting as judge. In the end the prize is carried off by the Palmer, who happens to remark casually that in all his travels he has never once met "any one woman out of patience."

We have followed the migration of the drama from the church to the market-place and street, and from there to the banqueting halls of the nobility. We have also seen how from being the exclusive concern of the Church it had been claimed by the general public, and had in consequence almost lost its religious character. Abstract disquisitions were disappearing in favour of realistic incidents, and by the end of the fifteenth century all the typical elements of English Comedy were present except the idea of design or plot. This was soon to be provided.

### *Plays on Classic Models.*

During the Renaissance students at the English Universities and boys at the greater Grammar Schools



included in their studies the plays of Ancient Rome. These plays soon appeared on the English stage (*i.e.* on the dais in the dining-hall) before educated audiences, and it was not long before English plays were written on the same model. The Latin writers had accepted the structural laws of drama as practised by the Greek dramatists ; with these laws the new type of English drama more or less conformed. This was specially so in Tragedy ; in Comedy much of the spirit of the native Miracle and Morality Plays survived. It was for his own boys, doubtless, that the schoolmaster, Nicholas Udall, wrote *Ralph Roister Doister* (1550?), the first known example of formal comedy. It is divided into Acts and Scenes, and preserves the Three Unities of Classical Drama. Several of his characters are obvious reflections of well-known classic figures, but the spirit is throughout that of the native drama we have been considering. In the Prologue the play is termed an " Interlude," and the very names of the characters—Merygreek, Goodluck, Trustie, Mumblecrust, Talkapace—recall the *dramatis personæ* of the Moralities.

The first regular English tragedy, *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*, was performed before Queen Elizabeth on January 17, 1561. It has also the special distinction of being the earliest English play written in blank verse. Its authors were Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. An English story is thrown into the mould of Senecan tragedy, and takes the impression in all but a few details. It is advertised by an " Argument " which runs thus :

" Gorboduc, King of Brittain, divided his realme in his life time to his sonnes, Ferrex and Porrex. The sonnes fell to discention. The yonger killed the elder. The mother, that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the yonger. The people, moved with the crueltie of the fact, rose in rebellion and slew both father and mother. The nobilitie assembled and most terribly

destroyed the rebels. And afterwarde for want of issue of the prince whereby the succession of the crowne became uncertaine, they fell to civill warre, in which both they and many of their issues were slaine, and the land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted."

It is doubtful whether even the action-loving Elizabethans could have sat through a representation of such a welter of blood as this. As a matter of fact most of the action is supposed to take place behind the scenes, and is reported, in true classic fashion, by messengers. The greater part of the play consists of philosophic dissertations and moral reflections, and at the end "four ancient and wise men of England" point the moral of the story. It is a dull play, but its importance in the history of English blank verse justifies a brief quotation. The verse should be contrasted with examples of Shakespeare's early, middle, and later styles.

*Clotyn.* Did ever age bring forth such tirants harts ?  
The brother hath bereft the brothers life,  
The mother she hath died her cruell handes  
In blood of her owne sonne, and now at last  
The people loe, forgetting triuth and love,  
Contemning quite both law and loyall hart,  
Even they have slaine their soveraigne lord and  
    queene.

queen.

*Mandud.* Shall this their traitorous crime unpunished  
rest?  
Even yet they cease not—caryed on with rage  
In their rebellious routes—to threaten still  
A new bloudshed unto the princes kinne;  
To slay them all and to uproote the race  
Both of the king and queene, so are they  
moved  
With Porrex death; wherein they falsely charge  
The giltlesse king, without desert at all;  
And traitorously have murdered him therefore,  
And eke the queene.

*Gwenard.* Shall subjectes dare with force  
To worke revenge upon their princes fact?



Admit the worst that may, as sure in this  
The deede was fowle, the queene to slay her  
    sonne,  
Shall yet the subject seeke to take the sworde,  
Arise agaynst his lord and slay his king ?  
O wretched state, where those rebellious hartes  
Are not rent out, even from their living  
    breastes,  
And with their body throwen unto the foules  
As carrion foode, for terrour of the rest.

### *The Chronicle Play.*

One other type of drama must be mentioned before we close this short survey. That is the Chronicle Play. The name is given to a play which deals with the chief events of a single reign. The germ of it was contained in a Morality Play of 1548, called *Kyng Johan*, and commonly attributed to Bishop Bale. From 1585 onwards many such plays were written, some of which provided the raw material for the great historical plays of Shakespeare. Practically the whole history of England to the time of Henry VIII. was covered. This growing interest in England's historic past was no doubt partly the result and partly the cause of the intense national feeling that developed during the reign of Elizabeth.

### *The Triumph of our Native Drama.*

In varying stages of development and decay all the forms of drama we have thus far dealt with were in existence when Marlowe and Shakespeare began to write. On the one hand they found a native drama vigorous but disjointed; exciting but crude, and appealing largely to the unlettered populace. On the other hand there was the regular drama of alien inspiration, decorous rather than affecting, and appealing naturally to the scholarly and the "high-brows." Which of these two modes was to govern the course of English drama? The question was almost settled

before Shakespeare's genius placed the issue beyond all question. His immediate predecessors listened to what the classic stalwarts like Sidney had to say, and then gave the people what they wanted. They accepted with gratitude certain principles of form and economy, but they definitely refused to be bound by the embarrassing rules of the so-called classical tradition. It was a decision of the greatest significance, a decision which established once and for all the freer principles of what we now know as the English Romantic Drama.

The rules of classical drama which Shakespeare and his contemporaries found so embarrassing are embodied in what are called the Three Unities. The limitations imposed on the playwright by these Unities were briefly these : Firstly, in order to achieve unity of tone, tragedy and comedy were to be kept entirely separate ; for a similar reason all sub-plots or subsidiary episodes which might check the movement of the story were to be excluded. Secondly, the action of the play should be of such a nature that the time it would occupy in actual life should correspond as nearly as possible with the time taken to represent it on the stage : in other words, the action should not be broken by intervals of time. Thirdly, all the action should be confined to one place : this resulted naturally from the second law. If you compare these principles with those practised by Shakespeare you will realize how restricted the classical dramatist was both in choice of material and in treatment. In order to condense the plot important actions were assumed to have taken place off the stage, and were reported to the audience by messengers or were revealed in the dialogue. Thus action, which the Elizabethans loved, was reduced to a minimum. Shakespeare found laughter and tears such close neighbours in real life that he refused to separate them in the drama, and disregarded altogether in most of his plays the classical



laws of Time and Place. He represents within two or three hours events which have admittedly extended over months, and transfers his characters from place to place at will, sometimes shipping them overseas. His "addiction" to sub-plots, a serious offence in the eyes of the classical purists, has given us among other delights the lovely Lorenzo and Jessica scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*, the rollicking Illyrians in *Twelfth Night*, the Falstaffian humour that flavours *The History of Henry IV.*, and, in every play he wrote, something that has enriched the English stage. It has been the French custom to praise the poet in Shakespeare and to disparage the dramatist. It is a mistake to think, as they do, that because Shakespeare breaks the rules that govern their own drama his plays have no structure at all. Genius breaks established laws only to set up others in their place, and any one who takes the trouble to study the weaving of plots in such plays as *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, and the development of the action in *Julius Cæsar*, for example, will require no further evidence of Shakespeare's craftsmanship. Blemishes there are in his work, often the results of hasty composition; it is easy to discover instances of bombastic diction, shallow philosophy, and unnecessary pandering to the coarse taste of those in every audience whose palates are tickled by the unwholesome. But for each ounce of dross there are pounds of the purest gold. It is over three hundred years since he died, and still, year by year, his plays challenge the attention of the world's finest scholars, and night after night fill one of London's most "unfashionable" theatres with the world's finest playgoers. And what say the actors themselves? The most renowned players, from Betterton to Sybil Thorndike, have assured us that every attempt to interpret Shakespeare's characters is a new and vital experience, and that years of study and rehearsal fail to deprive them of their freshness.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

FROM the brief survey of pre-Shakespearean drama given in Chapter VI., you will have learnt how the mediæval stage had to adapt itself to the changing character and fortunes of the drama. We have now to consider how social, economic, and other causes led to the establishment of permanent structures in which professional players could find respite from their uneasy life of vagabondage.

In early Tudor times the house of a great noble was a self-contained community. Often enough it was remote from any large town, and the problem of providing amusement for a large circle of guests, dependants, and retainers was no easy one. In every establishment of this kind there were always a few men who by their natural gifts were specially fitted to entertain their fellows and employers, and the tedium of long winter evenings was often relieved by songs, dances, exhibitions of wrestling, sword-play, tumbling, and the like. The disbanding of retainers, brought about partly by Henry VII.'s deep-rooted suspicion of his powerful barons, and partly by the steady desertion of their country estates by these nobles, who were attracted by the growing glamour of London life, filled the roads with masterless men, many of whom had no experience of either trade or industry. Natural ability that had hitherto been developed as a pastime was now turned to professional advantage, and small bands of



men were to be found hawking their repertoires about the inns of the great towns and in the halls of the nobility. In order to overcome the slow-dying feudal suspicion of all masterless men, these little companies of "strolling players" sought the official patronage of some "lord" whose name and position would be a guarantee of their respectability. An Act of Parliament, dated 1572, provided that "all ydle persones goinge about in any Countrey (*i.e.* county) of the said Realme—having not Lord or Master . . . and all Fencers bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes and Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other Personage of greater Degree (some companies were favoured by royal patronage) . . . which . . . shall wander abroad and have not Lycense of two Justices of the Peace at the leaste . . . shalbee taken adjudged and deemed Roges Vacabondes and Sturdy Beggers." The official style of an authorized company, such as "The Lord Chamberlain's Servants," bore witness to the value attached to this warranty.

The great inn of the period provided an admirable ready-made theatre for the popular drama. Its spacious court or yard was surrounded on three sides by an open gallery on the level of the upper floor. This gallery provided superior accommodation for such guests as were in the mood for amusement. A mixed audience of servants, tapsters, apprentices, and "ale-washed wits" was easily housed in the yard below. On the fourth side a stage was set up on trestles, and so, as far as essentials were concerned, the players were quickly and inexpensively equipped.

London, with its large permanent population and considerable "turn-over" of visitors, was the "land of promise" in the dreams of the ambitious actor, and, having once tasted its applause and its other delights, he regarded provincial tours as periods of banishment. "How chances it they travel?" asks Hamlet when the

visit of some strolling players is announced. "Do they grow rusty?" Before 1570 plays were frequently staged at the Boar's Head, Aldgate, the Horse's Head in Cheapside, the Cross Keys in Gracious (now Gracechurch) Street, the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, and the Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill.

The old proverb, "Please one, please all," found little justification in London as far as the actor was concerned. To many people of the sober-minded sort he was "the very devil incardinate," to whose unholy practices plagues and pestilences were directly due. "The cause of plagues is sinne, if you look to it well," says one critic; "the cause of sinne are playes; therefore the cause of plagues are players." The opposition was so effective in the councils of the city authorities that players gradually drifted into the neighbouring borough of Southwark to escape the irksome regulations enforced in the metropolis. Southwark had already gathered to its sympathetic bosom a promiscuous rabble of showmen and other purveyors of public amusement. With London so near there was no lack of patrons. Moreover, visitors from abroad often arrived in the borough just after the gates of the city were closed, and were compelled perforce to stay the night in one of the great Southwark inns—the "Tabard," the "White Hart," or the "Catherine Wheel"—and no doubt welcomed such entertainment as the neighbourhood could provide. The fame of these inns had travelled far beyond the English Channel. They were commodious places even in Chaucer's time:

"The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste."

Writing in 1577, a visitor to England is full of admiration for them: "Each comer is sure to be in a clean sheet. . . . Here, in England, every man may use his



inn as his own house, and have for his money how great or how little victual he pleases."

There is little doubt that the host whose inn-yard accommodated a company of players levied a toll on the takings and imposed restrictions which would tend to accumulate rather than diminish. In these circumstances the erection of independent theatres was only a question of time. The first of these permanent structures, the Theatre, was set up, not in Southwark, but in Holywell Lane, now Shoreditch, in 1576. It is mentioned, together with its rival, the Curtain, in John Stow's *A Survey of London* (1578). "This priory (*i.e.* Holywell) was valued at the suppression to have lands two hundred and ninety-three pounds by the year, and were surrendered 1539, the 31st of Henry VIII. The church thereof being pulled down, many houses have been built for the lodgings of noble-men, of strangers born, and others. And near thereunto are builded two public-houses for the acting and shew of comedies, tragedies, and histories for recreation. Whereof the one is called the Curtain, the other the Theatre: both standing on the south-west side towards the field."

By the end of the century there were at least eight others in and about London, including the Globe, in which Shakespeare had a financial interest. From the river stairs opposite Old St. Paul's one could see the turret of this theatre, its flag unfurled when a performance was about to begin. River-men would compete noisily for fares, while boats, heavily freighted with playgoers, made precariously for the landing at Bankside. A contemporary drawing of the Globe theatre reveals a building of no great architectural beauty. Plain wooden walls pierced with small apertures were capped by a rough thatch and plastered with play-bills of a startling redness which intensified the dinginess of their background. In outward appearance these early theatres resembled the neighbouring

bear-pits. Internally they reproduced the familiar arrangements of the old inn-yards, with this exception that sometimes the pit or yard was circular instead of rectangular. Tiers of galleries with a roof of thatch or tiles surrounded the yard, which was open to the weather. The stage projected into the yard, the up-stage portion having a roof with "a sufficient gutter of leade to carrie and convey the water from the covering of the saide stage to fall backwards," so that the rain water should not drip on the actors playing well forward. The stage itself was often supported on trestles, and so constructed that it could be moved if the yard was required for bear-baiting. The Globe seems to have been planned exclusively for drama, and so could boast a sweeter atmosphere than other theatres which admitted bears and other animals within their arenas. At the back of the stage two doors, one on each side, led to the dressing-rooms; between these a third door opened into a recess or inner stage, which could represent at need a bedroom, a cave, a shop, or a vaulted tomb. When not in use this third door was masked by a curtain wide enough, when fully extended, to serve as a back-cloth for the stage proper. Above the recess was another small chamber or "upper stage." Occasionally it served as a "box" for distinguished patrons; at other times it would indicate variously Juliet's balcony, a pulpit, or the parapet of a mediæval castle wall. That the inner and upper stages were present in the early theatres is proved by their use in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. Barabas plans to destroy Calymath by cutting a cable which holds the floor of the upper stage in position.

"Now, as for Calymath and his consorts,  
Here have I made a dainty gallery,  
The floor whereof, this cable being cut,  
Doth fall asunder, so that it doth sink  
Into a deep pit past recovery."



Ferneze, to whom he has confided his plan, is so appalled by the inhuman device that he cuts the cable while Barabas is standing on the collapsible floor. The curtains concealing the stage are at the same time withdrawn, discovering a boiling cauldron into which Barabas is precipitated. It is possible that scenes requiring properties were arranged in the inner stage while the front stage was in use.

Back-cloths or pieces of arras rudely painted were sometimes used to indicate exterior or interior scenes. More often printed cards suspended from the pillars supporting the roof of the stage supplied the necessary information. The absence of theatrical scenery as we know it to-day was bound to affect the methods of production ; it influenced the playwright no less profoundly in the construction of his plots. The fact that no time was lost in scene-changing accounts for the great length of plays like *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and also for the amazing number of separate scenes. To play *Hamlet*, uncut and unaltered, under modern conditions would require at least six hours, whereas in Shakespeare's time a little over two hours sufficed. The minds of the audience were coaxed by the dialogue and stimulated by the poetry of the dramatist to imagine the appropriate scenery for themselves. Not infrequently a formal apology was offered for the poverty of the staging and an appeal made for the co-operation of the audience. The absence of a front curtain and the presentation of plays in broad daylight had results hardly less significant. To the former circumstance were due the many stage directions arranging for the conveyance from the stage of the bodies of the slain. From the latter circumstance arose the dramatist's ingenious methods of suggesting darkness by means of his dialogue. The orchard scene in *Julius Cæsar* provides a good example.

If we are to judge from the stage directions of the time, the patrons of the theatre took an almost childish

delight in "noises off" and other stage effects. Drums, cannon balls rolled about on the hollow flooring of the tiring-house, trumpets, flashes of artificial lightning, clashing of arms and other "alarums" were looked for and provided with great prodigality. The audience liked plenty of action, too; and the wrestling bouts, sword-play, and other active "business" were entrusted to well-known experts, whose performances appealed much in the same way as the variety "turns" of to-day.

There was no attempt at "period" costume. The actors wore the fashionable dress of their own time. Distinctions of rank were denoted by the varying degrees of richness or meanness of apparel. The costumes of the greater folk were of the most costly description, and were often a severe tax on the financial resources of the company.

The parts of Shakespeare's heroines were taken by boys or beardless young men, who, on account of the high standard of proficiency required, were extremely well paid. It was not until after the Restoration that actresses began to grace the boards of the English theatres. An entry in Pepys's *Diary*, under the date January 3, 1661, reads: "Here the first time that ever I saw a woman come upon the stage." In a royal licence, granted to the dramatist Davenant in 1662, it was ordained "That whereas the women's parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence, we do permit, and give leave, for the time to come, that all women's parts be acted by women." The change over took some time, and actors like Kynaston, who excelled in female parts, held their own until the supply of actresses could meet the demand. On one occasion, at a play attended by Charles II., the performance was late in beginning because Kynaston, who was cast for the queen, was not ready. His Majesty sent for the manager, Sir William Davenant, and testily asked



for an explanation. "Please you, sir," replied Sir William, "the queen is not yet shaved." "The playing of women's parts by boys," says Mr. Masefield, "may have limited Shakespeare's art. His women are kept within the range of thought and emotion likely to be understood by boys. This may account for their wholesome, animal robustness. There is no trace of the modern heroine, the common woman overstrained, or the idle woman in her megrims, in any Shakespearean play. The people of the plays are alive and hearty. They lead a vigorous life and go to bed tired. They never forget that they are animals. They never let any one else forget that they are also divine."

The clown, that twinkling star of the dramatic firmament, may be said to have reached his zenith in Elizabethan times. A taste for broad fooling had been encouraged by the antics of the Devil and the Vice in the Moralities and Interludes. The Elizabethan appetite for this form of diversion was insatiable. If the "fat" parts given by Shakespeare to his clowns reveal the practical-minded dramatist, with his bread to earn, giving the people what they liked, the immeasurable superiority of Feste, Touchstone, and Lear's Fool over their predecessors in the drama reveals the master mind turning trivial matter to mighty purposes. The clown was sometimes put to mean employment. The wit supplied to him was often merely "a mental game, a sort of battledore and shuttlecock, in which the jokes themselves might be indifferent since the point of the game lay in keeping it up as smartly and as long as possible." As if to make amends, Shakespeare arranged for him moments of rare wisdom, and restored his self-esteem by allotting to him some of the most lovely lyrics the English drama can boast. So important did the rôle of the fool become that its exponents were among the best paid members of the profession.

Long before Shakespeare's time the drama had used the embellishments of music. The regals (a kind of portable organ) were called upon to "play a mourning song" in a play called *Damon and Pythias* as early as 1564. The fiddle was used earlier still both for "soft sad music" and for lively jigs. The viol de gamboys, the favourite instrument of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, was a kind of 'cello. There were also bass viols and several instruments of the mandoline family. No Elizabethan clown was complete without his pipe and tabor. The former was a three-holed flute; the latter a small drum, open at one end, and usually beaten with the finger-tips. Hautboys, recorders, and shawms are frequently mentioned; all three were modifications of the flute. The sennet, so often found in Shakespeare's stage directions, was a musical phrase given out by the trumpet, generally to announce the approach of some great personage. To mention bagpipes of various kinds is by no means to exhaust the list.

When an orchestra was engaged for a dramatic performance it was usually placed either in the tiring-house or in the upper stage, if the latter was available. For certain scenes, like the opening of *Twelfth Night*, several of the musicians would descend on to the stage.

The usual charge for admission to the pit of the public theatre was one penny. An additional charge was made for a seat in the covered gallery. In contrast with the theatre of to-day the most expensive seats were occupied almost exclusively by men. No woman of refinement would risk the social consequences of being seen at a public playhouse. Those who made the rare experiment disguised their features behind a velvet mask. In the pit, however, there was generally a fair sprinkling of the gentler sex. Apprentices took their sweethearts, humble citizens their wives. There would always be an apple-woman or two and other vendors of refreshment, and no doubt a few



hussies whose interests lay neither in the play nor in honest business. Leathern-belted apprentices made up the majority of the patrons in this part of the theatre ; and an unruly roystering crew they were. Judging from the quantity of apples, nuts, herring pies, and bottles of beer consumed, these full-blooded youths looked for something more than intellectual nourishment. Before the play commenced, and at any time when the interest slackened, they kept up a running fire of gibes and pleasantries with one another and with such sparks of the more fashionable sort whose dress or affectations challenged their audacity, sometimes pointing their witticisms with well-directed apple-cores or chunks of disappointing pie-crust. In *Henry VIII.* Shakespeare refers to them as " youths that thunder at the playhouses, and fight for bitten apples."

The sides of the stage were sometimes adorned by gay dandies and young bloods whose servants provided them with stools and small gaming tables. There was much competition for this favoured position ; consequently it was necessary to arrive early, and dice and cards helped to while away the long time of waiting. Thomas Dekker, in *The Gulls Horne Book* (1609), gives some satirical counsel to these gallants. Once established on the stage, they were to resist all efforts to scare them away, " though the scarecrows in the yard hoot at you, hiss at you, spit at you, yea, throw dirt even in your teeth : 'tis most gentlemanlike patience to endure all this and to laugh at the silly animals. . . . If the writer be a fellow that hath either epigrammed you, or hath had a flirt at your mistress, or hath brought either your feather, or your red beard, or your little legs, etc., on the stage ; you shall disgrace him worse than by tossing him in a blanket, or giving him the bastinado in a tavern, if, in the middle of his play, be it pastoral or comedy, moral or tragedy, you rise with a screwed and discontented face from your

stool to be gone. No matter whether the scenes be good, or no ; the better they are, the worse do you distaste them. And, being on your feet, sneak not away like a coward ; but salute all your gentle acquaintance, that are spread either on the rushes, or on stools about you ; and draw what troop you can from the stage after you. . . . Marry ; if either the company or indisposition of the weather bind you to sit it out, my counsel is then that you turn plain ape. Take up a rush, and tickle the earnest ears of your fellow gallants, to make other fools fall a laughing ; mew at passionate speeches ; blare at merry ; find fault with the music ; whew at the children's action ; whistle at the songs ; and, above all, curse the sharers (*i.e.* the proprietors), that whereas the same day you had bestowed forty shillings on an embroidered felt and feather, Scotch fashion, for your mistress in the court, . . . within two hours after you encounter with the very same block on the stage, when the haberdasher swore to you the impression was extant but that morning."

There were two types of rascality rarely absent from a theatrical performance. One was the common pick-pocket, who, if caught in the act, was instantly seized, dragged to the stage, and bound to one of the pillars which supported the stage roof, to become the common butt of all the refuse that the surfeited appetite of the audience could spare. The other aroused the just resentment of the playwright. Provided with his "tables"—small pieces of slate bound together—he visited performance after performance until he had made a copy of the play in a kind of shorthand. In this way the author was often cheated out of his copyright. Unfortunately, it was difficult to distinguish this literary pirate from the harmless scribbler, who merely took down passages that pleased his fancy, or enabled him to criticize the play in his favourite tavern. Dekker's concluding advice to his gulls at the play is to "hoard up the finest play-scrap you can get,



upon which your lean wit may most savourly feed, for want of other stuff, when the Arcadian and Euphuized gentlewomen have their tongues sharpened to set upon you : that quality (next to your shuttlecock) is the only furniture to a courtier that's but a new beginner, and is but in his A B C of compliment. The next places that are filled after the playhouses be emptied, are, or ought to be, taverns ; into a tavern then let us next march, where the brains of one hogshead must be beaten out to make up another."

In addition to the public playhouses, there were several private theatres like the Blackfriars. They were comparatively small, were completely roofed over, and always depended upon artificial light. Consequently, performances could be given at any time of the day and in all weathers. Their respectability was assured by the high price of the seats. It was at the Blackfriars theatre that the choir-boy actors, "the Children of the Chapel," gave performances which aroused the jealousy of the public companies—jealousy which pricked even the generous heart of Shakespeare. Hamlet hears of them from Rosencrantz : "There is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases (*i.e.* unfledged hawks), that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't ; these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages—so they call them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither." In other words, the goose-quills, writers of plays for the children, had made the public theatres unfashionable.

The careers of men like Philip Henslowe, his son-in-law Edward Alleyn, founder of Dulwich College, and Shakespeare himself, show that dramatic talent and business ability met with substantial rewards. Henslowe was evidently a believer in "big business." He included in his operations, besides the building of theatres, a profitable system of loans to struggling dramatists and actors, a pawnbroking business, and

an emporium of costumes and properties for sale or hire. Apart from the principals, the actors of Shakespeare's time stood little chance against a powerful employer like Henslowe, who contrived to keep most of his players in his debt. He had actually been heard to say: "Should these fellows come out of my debt I should have no rule with them." He it was who instituted the immoral practice of discharging players in order to re-engage them at lower rates of pay. The papers he has left are full of interest. They tell us, for instance, that before 1600 he never gave an author more than £8 for a play, yet he parted with £16 for an embroidered velvet cloak. It is consoling, however, to know that many of the dubiously-gotten gains of this speculating theatrical "boss" were, after his death, diverted to the cause of education.

## EXERCISES

1. What light do the following passages throw on the structure, general arrangements, and limitations of the Elizabethan stage?

(a) *Brutus*. What watchful cares do interpose themselves

Betwixt your eyes and night?

*Cassius*. Shall I entreat a word?

[*Brutus and Cassius whisper.*]

*Decius*. Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?

*Casca*. No.

*Cinna*. O! pardon, sir, it doth; and yon grey lines That fret the clouds are messengers of day.

*Casca*. You shall confess that you are both deceived.

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,  
Which is a great way growing on the south,  
Weighing the youthful season of the year.  
Some two months hence up higher toward the north  
He first presents his fire; and the high east  
Stands, as the Capitol, directly here.



- (b) " But pardon, gentles all,  
 The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd  
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
 So great an object : can this cockpit hold  
 The vasty fields of France ? or may we cram  
 Within this wooden O the very casques  
 That did affright the air at Agincourt ? "
- (c) " O ! for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
 The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,  
 That did not better for my life provide  
 Than public means which public manners breeds.  
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
 And almost thence my nature is subdu'd  
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."
- Sonnet CXI.*
- (d) *Bottom.* What beard were I best to play it in ?  
*Quince.* Why, what you will.  
*Bottom.* I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your perfect yellow.  
*Quince.* Masters, here are your parts, and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night. . . . In the meantime, I will draw a bill of properties such as our play wants.
- (e) " If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man."
- (f) *Regan.* Go thrust him out at gates, and let him  
 smell  
 His way to Dover. [Exit one with Gloucester.]  
 How is't, my lord ? How look you ?  
*Cornwall.* I have received a hurt. Follow me,  
 lady.  
 Turn out that eyeless villain ; throw this slave  
 Upon the dunghill.
- (g) *Hamlet.* Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue ; but if

you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus ; but use all gently : for in the very torrent, tempest, and—as I may say—whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness. O ! it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise : I would have such a fellow whipped for o'er-doing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod : pray you, avoid it. . . . And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them ; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered ; that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.

- (h) *Antony.* Is thy master coming ?  
*Servant.* He lies to-night within seven leagues of Rome.  
*Antony.* Post back with speed, and tell him what hath chanced :  
 Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome,  
 No Rome of safety for Octavius yet ;  
 Hie hence and tell him so. Yet stay awhile ;  
 Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corpse  
 Into the market-place ; there I shall try,  
 In my oration, how the people take  
 The cruel issue of these bloody men ;  
 According to the which thou shalt discourse  
 To young Octavius of the state of things.  
 Lend me your hand. [*Exeunt with Cæsar's body.*]

(i) " Let them know the author defies them and their writing-tables."

(j) " And so our scene must to the battle fly ;  
 Where,—O for pity—we shall much disgrace,  
 With four or five most vile and ragged foils,  
 Right ill dispos'd in brawl ridiculous,



The name of Agincourt. Yet, sit and see ;  
Minding true things by what their mockeries be."

- (k) "Overlashing in apparel is so common a fault, that the very hirelings of some of our players, which stand at reversion of six shillings by the week, jet it under gentlemen's noses in suits of silk, exercising themselves to prating on the stage, and common scoffing when they come abroad, where they look askance over the shoulder at every man, of whom the Sunday before they begged an alms."
- (l) "In the city of Gloucester, the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that when players of interludes come to town, they first attend the mayor, to inform him what nobleman's servants they are, and so to get licence for their public playing ; and if the mayor like the actors, or would show respect to their lord and master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the aldermen and common council of the city." (1639.)
- (m) "Among other choleric wise justices he was one, that having a play presented before him and his township by Tarleton and the rest of his fellows, Her Majesty's Servants, and they were now entering into their first merriment (as they call it), the people began exceedingly to laugh when Tarleton first peeped out his head. Whereat the justice, not a little moved, and seeing with his becks and nods he could not make them cease, he went with his staff, and beat them round about unmercifully on the bare pates, in that they, being but farmers and poor country hinds, would presume to laugh at the Queen's men, and make no more account of her cloth in his presence." (1592.)
- (n) "Now o'er the one half-world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep : witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings ; and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with stealthy pace,  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design

Moves like a ghost.—Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
The very stones prate of my whereabout,  
And take the present horror from the time,  
Which now suits with it.—Whiles I threat, he lives :  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.  
[*A bell rings.*]

I go, and it is done : the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan ; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.” [Exit.]

(o) “ Good morrow, masters ; put your torches out.  
The wolves have prey’d, and look, the gentle day,  
Before the wheels of Phœbus, round about  
Dapples the drowsy East with spots of grey.”

(p) “ How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank !  
Here we will sit and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears : soft stillness and the night  
Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :  
There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins ;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.”

(q) *Portia*. Peace, ho ! the moon sleeps with Endymion

And would not be awak’d ! [Music ceases.]

*Lorenzo*. That is the voice,  
Or I am much deceiv’d, of Portia.

*Portia*. He knows me as the blind man knows the  
cuckoo,  
By the bad voice.

(r) “ The quick comedians  
Extemporally will stage us, and present  
Our Alexandrian revels : Antony  
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness . . .”



2. Imagine yourself a spectator of one of the early performances of *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, and give an account of what you would be likely to see and hear.

3. From an examination of any one of Shakespeare's plays draw up a list of scenes and passages that modern stage-craft would enable the producer to omit. To what extent would the play suffer as the result of these omissions ?

4. In what respects does the modern stage differ from the stage of Shakespeare's time ?

5. What is there to be said for and against the production of Shakespeare's plays (*a*) as nearly as possible in the Elizabethan manner, (*b*) in the grandiose manner cultivated by Irving, Tree, and their successors, and (*c*) in modern dress ?

## CHAPTER VIII

### MYSTICISM IN ENGLISH POETRY

You will, I hope, by this time have made sufficient progress in the study of poetry to allow its claim to a place among the greater arts. If the poet did no more than create things of beauty for our delight we should honour his calling. But the great poet is measured by other standards. Form in poetry is of itself of no more value than ceremony in religion whence the spirit has departed. The kindred of great minds is shown in this, that all in a variety of ways accept the challenge of life's greatest problems. It is the nature of some men to brush these problems aside with a gesture that savours more of bravado than of courage. Others dedicate their lives and their gifts to the baffling quest of Truth. Above all else the mystery of man's place in the scheme of things has from the earliest times stimulated and inspired human thought and endeavour. The achievements of science and philosophy are recorded and scheduled for our information. The experiences of the mystics are another matter which none but mystics know. Accordingly, no attempt will be made here to define mysticism—still less to explain it. But it enters into the thought of so many of our great poets that no serious student of poetry can afford to ignore it.

On one point all mystics seem to be agreed. They ~~are vividly aware of some principle of unity underlying all the infinite variety of life.~~ They have not reached this position through argument, reasoning, or indeed



through any process of thought. ~~Their knowledge is the result rather of spiritual experience, so powerful as to leave no room for doubt or argument.~~ The fact that these experiences occur at rare moments of spiritual exaltation does not invalidate, but rather strengthens the mystic's conviction. He believes that there is a world into which the cold dispassionate logical mind cannot enter, and that neither science nor philosophy will ever solve the baffling problem of man's mysterious destiny.

Belief in the principle of unity at the heart of diversity has revealed to the mystic the divine essence which inhabits all created things, however various their forms and manifestations. It is through this universal kinship with one another and with the supreme Author of life that real understanding is alone possible. Man must not be satisfied with observation, analysis, inference—he must *become* for the time being what he wants to understand. Insight, you observe, not intellect, is to be the fount of knowledge in spiritual matters. One thing only is eternal, one thing only is changeless, and that is the divine essence, the spiritual kinship of “all objects of all thought.”

“There is true knowledge. Learn thou it is this :  
To see one changeless Life in all the Lives,  
And in the Separate, One Inseparable.”

One result of this knowledge is the mystic's ceaseless aspiration towards union with God. To understand Him it is necessary to be like Him—to develop the divinity that is within us. “Simple people,” says one writer, “conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so ; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.” We are to learn the wisdom of looking for God here and now, as a Presence to be seen and felt both within ourselves and in the humblest and meanest of created things. “The Kingdom of God is within you” forms

the text of Francis Thompson's poem *In No Strange Land*.

" O world invisible, we view thee,  
O world intangible, we touch thee,  
O world unknowable, we know thee,  
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee !

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
The eagle plunge to find the air—  
That we ask of the stars in motion  
If they have rumour of thee there ?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars !—  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places ;  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing !  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
Cry ;—and upon thy so sore loss  
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems ;  
And lo, Christ walking on the water  
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames !"

The all-pervading nature of the divine spirit is the theme of Evelyn Underhill's *Immanence*.

" I come in the little things,  
Saith the Lord ;  
Not borne on morning wings  
Of majesty, but I have set My Feet  
Amidst the delicate and bladed wheat  
That springs triumphant in the furrowed sod.  
There do I dwell, in weakness and in power ;  
Not broken or divided, saith our God !



In your strait garden plot I come to flower :  
 About your porch My Vine  
 Meek, fruitful, doth entwine ;  
 Waits, at the threshold, Love's appointed hour.

I come in the little things,  
 Saith the Lord :  
 Yea ! on the glancing wings  
 Of eager birds, the softly pattering feet  
 Of furred and gentle beasts, I come to meet  
 Your hard and wayward heart. In brown bright eyes  
 That peep from out the brake, I stand confest.  
 On every nest  
 Where feathery Patience is content to brood  
 And leaves her pleasure for the high emprise  
 Of motherhood—  
 There doth My Godhead rest.

I come in the little things,  
 Saith the Lord :  
 My starry wings  
 I do forsake,  
 Love's highway of humility to take :  
 Meekly I fit my stature to your need.  
 In beggar's part  
 About your gates I shall not cease to plead—  
 As man, to speak with man—  
 Till by such art  
 I shall achieve My Immemorial Plan,  
 Pass the low lintel of the human heart."

It has been argued that Browning, Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley—to mention only a few of our greater poets—were all mystics of one form or another. It is safer to say that mystical thought appealed to them as valuable poetic material. At any rate they were for the most part poets first, which means that they were not authentic mystics at all. Mysticism fills the whole of a man's life, and the "worldly things men set their hearts upon" are deemed the mere "broken débris" of wasteful days. Even with a poet like

Wordsworth mundane and material things were constantly breaking in.

The poet, however, with his penetrating imagination, is perhaps the best interpreter of mystical thought. Wordsworth has described as well as any the state of spiritual preparation which fits a man for flashes of illumination and insight :

“ That serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul :  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.”

Quietude, harmony, joy ; these are the three stages in the mystic's progress. It is Wordsworth, too, who has made us familiar with the doctrine that “ all knowledge is recollection,” that our souls, being immortal, reach back as well as forwards, and existed before our birth, and that the splendour of the heretofore clings to our childhood, succumbing gradually to the assaults of material things. His great *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* is known to you all. *The Retreat*, by Henry Vaughan (1621-95), is almost as familiar, and is short enough to quote :

“ Happy those early dayes ! when I  
Shin'd in my Angell-infancy.  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy ought  
But a white, Celestiall thought ;  
When yet I had not walkt above  
A mile, or two, from my first love,  
And looking back (at that short space)  
Could see a glimpse of his bright face ;



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

When on some gilded Cloud, or flowre  
 My gazing soul would dwell an houre,  
 And in those weaker glories spy  
 Some shadows of eternity ;  
 Before I taught my tongue to wound  
 My Conscience with a sinfull sound,  
 Or had the black art to dispence  
 A sev'rall sinne to ev'ry sence,  
 But felt through all this fleshly dresse  
 Bright shootes of everlastingnesse.

O how I long to travell back  
 And tread again that ancient track !  
 That I might once more reach that plaine,  
 Where first I left my glorious traine,  
 From whence th' Inlightned spirit sees  
 That shady City of Palme trees ;  
 But (ah !) my soul with too much stay  
 Is drunk, and staggers in the way.  
 Some men a forward motion love,  
 But I by backward steps would move,  
 And when this dust falls to the urn  
 In that state I came return."

The following poem by Thomas Traherne has escaped most of the anthologists :

## Wonder

How like an Angel came I down !  
 How bright are all things here !  
 When first among his works I did appear  
 O how their glory did me crown !  
 The world resembled His Eternity,  
 In which my soul did walk ;  
 And every thing that I did see  
 Did with me talk.

The skies in their magnificence,  
 The lively, lovely air,  
 Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair !  
 The stars did entertain my sense,

And all the works of God, so bright and pure,  
 So rich and great did seem,  
 As if they ever must endure  
 In my esteem.

A native health and innocence  
 Within my bones did grow,  
 And while my God did all His Glories show,  
 I felt a vigour in my sense  
 That was all Spirit. I within did flow  
 With seas of life, like wine ;  
 I nothing in the world did know  
 But 'twas divine.

Harsh ragged objects were concealed,  
 Oppressions, tears, and cries,  
 Sins, griefs, complaints, dissensions, weeping eyes  
 Were hid, and only things revealed  
 Which heavenly Spirits and the Angels prize.  
 The state of Innocence  
 And bliss, not trades and poverties,  
 Did fill my sense.

The streets were paved with golden stones,  
 The boys and girls were mine,  
 O how did all their lovely faces shine !  
 The sons of men were holy ones,  
 In joy and beauty they appeared to me,  
 And every thing which here I found,  
 While like an Angel I did see,  
 Adorned the ground.

Rich diamond and pearl and gold  
 In every place was seen ;  
 Rare splendours, yellow, blue, red, white and green,  
 Mine eyes did everywhere behold.  
 Great wonders clothed with glory did appear,  
 Amazement was my bliss,  
 That and my wealth was everywhere ;  
 No joy to this !

Cursed and devised proprieties,  
 With envy, avarice  
 And fraud, those fiends that spoil even Paradise,  
 Flew from the splendour of mine eyes,



And so did hedges, ditches, limits, bounds.  
 I dreamed not aught of those,  
 But wandered over all men's grounds,  
 And found repose.

Proprieties themselves were mine,  
 And hedges ornaments ;  
 Walls, boxes, coffers, and their rich contents  
 Did not divide my joys, but all combine.  
 Clothes, ribbons, jewels, laces, I esteemed  
 My joys by others worn :  
 For me they all to wear them seemed  
 When I was born.

George Herbert (1593-1632), in a poem called *Man*, declares that all things, being kindred to our flesh in their descent and being, readily minister to our needs.

“ My God, I heard this day  
 That none doth build a stately habitation  
 But he that means to dwell therein.  
 What house more stately hath there been,  
 Or can be, than is Man ? to whose creation  
 All things are in decay.

For Man is ev'ry thing,  
 And more : he is a tree, yet bears no fruit ;  
 A beast, yet is, or should be, more :  
 Reason and speech we onely bring ;  
 Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,  
 They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetrie,  
 Full of proportions, one limb to another,  
 And all to all the world besides ;  
 Each part may call the farthest brother,  
 For head with foot hath private amitie,  
 And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so farre  
 But Man hath caught and kept it as his prey ;  
 His eyes dismount the highest starre ;  
 He is in little all the sphere ;  
 Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
 Find their acquaintance there.

For us the windes do blow,  
The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow ;  
Nothing we see but means our good,  
As our delight so as our treasure ;  
The whole is either our cupboard of food  
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The starres have us to bed,  
Night draws the curtain, which the sunne withdraws ;  
Musick and light attend our head,  
All things unto our flesh are kinde  
In their descent and being ; to our minde  
In their ascent and cause.

Each thing is full of dutie :  
Waters united are our navigation ;  
Distinguished, our habitation ;  
Below, our drink ; above, our meat ;  
Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie ?  
Then how are all things neat !

More servants wait on Man  
Than he'll take notice of : in ev'ry path  
He treads down that which doth befriend him  
When sicknesse makes him pale and wan.  
O mightie love ! Man is one world, and hath  
Another to attend him.

Since then, my God, Thou hast  
So brave a palace built, O dwell in it,  
That it may dwell with Thee at last !  
Till then afford us so much wit,  
That, as the world serves us, we may serve Thee,  
And both Thy servants be."

In a mood of rare exaltation Francis Thompson reveals in *The Hound of Heaven* the ultimate futility of man's repudiation of the fundamental facts of mysticism. The poetic accompaniment is at times too elaborate and insistent for the voice of the mystic, but there is no denying the magnificent sweep of the lines and the fervour of utterance. The poem is too long to be given here, but no collection of mystical verse would be complete without it.



The paths to spiritual knowledge are many and confusing, and equally various are the prospects of Truth glimpsed by the way. The following passages may not guide you to the goal of the mystic's journeyings, nor enable you to "sit i' the centre and enjoy bright day," but they may show you as from a hill-top the converging of many roads though the journey's end remains for ever hidden. Even if you are satisfied, with Stevenson, that "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive," you will not come empty away.

### Auguries of Innocence

To see a World in a grain of sand,  
And Heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour. . . .

The bat that flits at close of eve  
Has left the brain that won't believe.  
The owl that calls upon the night  
Speaks the unbeliever's fright. . . .

Joy and woe are woven fine,  
A clothing for the soul divine ;  
Under every grief and pine  
Runs a joy with silken twine. . . .

Every tear from every eye  
Becomes a babe in Eternity. . . .

The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar  
Are waves that beat on Heaven's shore. . . .

He who doubts from what he sees  
Will ne'er believe, do what you please.  
If the Sun and Moon should doubt,  
They'd immediately go out. . . .

God appears, and God is Light,  
To those poor souls who dwell in Night ;  
But does a Human Form display  
To those who dwell in realms of Day.

WILLIAM BLAKE, 1757-1827.

## I am the Reaper

I am the Reaper.  
 All things with heedful hook  
 Silent I gather.  
 Pale roses touched with the spring,  
 Tall corn in summer,  
 Fruits rich with autumn, and frail winter blossoms—  
 Reaping, still reaping—  
 All things with heedful hook  
 Timely I gather.

I am the Sower.  
 All the unbodied life  
 Runs through my seed-sheet.  
 Atom with atom wed,  
 Each quickening the other,  
 Fall through my hands, ever changing, still changeless.  
 Ceaselessly sowing,  
 Life, incorruptible life,  
 Flows from my seed-sheet.

Maker and breaker,  
 I am the ebb and the flood,  
 Here and Hereafter,  
 Sped through the tangle and coil  
 Of infinite nature,  
 Viewless and soundless I fashion all being.  
 Taker and giver,  
 I am the womb and the grave,  
 The Now and the Ever.

W. E. HENLEY, 1849-1903.

## From "The Excursion"

To every Form of being is assigned  
 An *active* Principle : howe'er removed  
 From sense and observation, it subsists  
 In all things, in all natures ; in the stars  
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
 The moving waters, the invisible air.



Whate'er exists hath properties that spread  
 Beyond itself, communicating good,  
 A simple blessing, or with evil mixed ;  
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
 No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link  
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.  
 This is the freedom of the universe ;  
 Unfolded still the more, more visible,  
 The more we know ; and yet is revered least,  
 And least respected in the human Mind,  
 Its most apparent home.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770-1850.

### From "Intimations of Immortality"

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home :  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing Boy,  
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy ;  
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended ;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away,  
 And fade into the light of common day.

. . . . .

O joy ! that in our embers  
 Is something that doth live,  
 That nature yet remembers  
 What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
 Perpetual benediction : not indeed  
 For that which is most worthy to be blest ;  
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed

Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :—

Not for these I raise  
The song of thanks and praise ;  
But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings ;  
Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized,  
High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised :  
But for those first affections,  
Those shadowy recollections,  
Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,  
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing ;  
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake  
To perish never :  
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
Nor Man nor Boy,  
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,  
Can utterly abolish or destroy !  
Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be,  
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

### From " Adonais "

He is made one with Nature : there is heard  
His voice in all her music, from the moan  
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;  
He is a presence to be felt and known  
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

Which wields the world with never-wearied love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

P. B. SHELLEY, 1792-1822.

## From "Human Life's Mystery"

God keeps His holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream ;  
In diapason slow, we think  
To hear their pinions rise and sink,  
While they float pure beneath His eyes,  
Like swans adown a stream.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms  
Of His great beauty ? exaltations  
From His great glory ? strong previsions  
Of what we shall be ? intuitions  
Of what we are—in calms and storms,  
Beyond our peace and passions ?

Things nameless ! which, in passing so,  
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.  
We say, " Who passes ? "—they are dumb.  
We cannot see them go or come :  
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow  
Upon a blind man's face.

Yet, touching so, they draw above  
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown,  
Our daily joy and pain advance  
To a divine significance,  
Our human love—O mortal love,  
That light is not its own !

E. B. BROWNING, 1806-61.

## From "Aurora Leigh"

Nothing's small !  
No lily-muffled hum of a summer bee,  
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars ;  
No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere ;  
No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim ;  
• • • • •

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God ;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.  
E. B. BROWNING.

From "The Ancient Sage"

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one :  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no,  
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven : wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith.  
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, 1809-92.

Flower in the Crannied Wall

Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies ;—  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.  
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

From "Paracelsus"

Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise  
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.  
There is an inmost centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fullness ; and around,  
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,  
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.  
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
Binds it, and makes all error : and, to KNOW,



## THE STUDY OF POETRY

Rather consists in opening out a way  
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
 Than in effecting entry for a light  
 Supposed to be without.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812-89.

From "Lines written in Kensington Gardens"

Calm soul of all things ! make it mine  
 To feel, amid the city's jar,  
 That there abides a peace of thine,  
 Man did not make, and cannot mar !

The will to neither strive nor cry,  
 The power to feel with others give !  
 Calm, calm me more ! nor let me die  
 Before I have begun to live.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, 1822-88.

## The Sea-Limits

Consider the sea's listless chime :  
 Time's self it is, made audible,—  
 The murmur of the earth's own shell.  
 Secret continuance sublime  
 Is the sea's end : our sight may pass  
 No furlong farther. Since time was,  
 This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath  
 The mournfulness of ancient life,  
 Enduring always at dull strife.  
 As the world's heart of rest and wrath,  
 Its painful pulse is in the sands,  
 Last utterly, the whole sky stands,  
 Grey and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,  
 Listen alone among the woods ;  
 Those voices of twin solitudes  
 Shall have one sound alike to thee :  
 Hark where the murmurs of thronged men  
 Surge and sink back and surge again,—  
 Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach  
 And listen at its lips : they sigh  
 The same desire and mystery,  
 The echo of the whole sea's speech  
 And all mankind is thus at heart  
 Not anything but what thou art :  
 And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI, 1828-82.

### At the End of Things

The world uprose as a man to find Him—  
 Ten thousand methods, ten thousand ends—  
 Some bent on treasure ; the more on pleasure ;  
 And some on the chaplet which fame attends :  
 But the great deep's voice in the distance dim  
 Said : Peace, it is well ; they are seeking Him.

When I heard that all the world was questing,  
 I look'd for a palmer's staff and found,  
 By a reed-fringed pond, a fork'd hazel-wand  
 On a twisted tree, in a bann'd waste ground ;  
 But I knew not then what the sounding strings  
 Of the sea-harps say at the end of things.

They told me, world, you were keen on seeking ;  
 I cast around for a scrip to hold  
 Such meagre needs as the roots of weeds—  
 All weeds, but one with a root of gold ;  
 Yet I knew not then how the clangs ascend  
 When the sea-horns peal and the searchings end.

An old worn wallet was that they gave me,  
 With twelve old signs on its seven old skins ;  
 And a star I stole for the good of my soul,  
 Lest the darkness came down on my sins ;  
 For I knew not who in their life had heard  
 Of the sea-pipes shrilling a secret word.

I join'd the quest that the world was making,  
 Which follow'd the false ways far and wide,  
 While a thousand cheats in the lanes and streets  
 Offer'd that wavering crowd to guide ;



But what did they know of the sea-reed's speech  
When the peace-words breathe at the end for each ?

The fools fell down in the swamps and marshes ;  
The fools died hard on the crags and hills ;  
The lies which cheated, so long repeated,  
Deceived, in spite of their evil wills,  
Some knaves themselves at the end of all—  
Though how should they hearken when sea-flutes call ?

But me the scrip and the staff had strengthen'd ;  
I carried the star ; that star led me :  
The paths I've taken, of most forsaken,  
Do surely lead to an open sea :  
As a clamour of voices heard in sleep,  
Come shouts through the dark on the shrouded deep.

Now it is noon ; in the hush prevailing  
Pipes, harps, and horns into flute-notes fall ;  
The sea, conceding my star's true leading,  
In tongues sublime at the end of all  
Gives resonant utterance far and near :—

*“ Cast away fear :  
Be of good cheer ;  
He is here,  
Is here ! ”*

And now I know that I sought Him only  
Even as child, when for flowers I sought ;  
In the sins of youth, as in search for truth,  
To find Him, hold Him alone I wrought.  
The knaves too seek Him, and fools beguiled—  
So speak to them also, sea-voices mild !

Which then was wisdom and which was folly ?  
Did my star more than the cozening guide ?  
The fool, as I think, at the chasm's brink,  
Prone by the swamp or the marsh's side,  
Did, even as I, in the end rejoice,  
Since the voice of death must be His true voice.

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE, b. 1860.

# I see His Blood upon the Rose

I see His blood upon the rose  
And in the stars the glory of His eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.

I see His face in every flower ;  
The thunder and the singing of the birds  
Are but His voice—and carven by His power,  
Rocks are His written words.

All pathways by His feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His cross is every tree.

JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT, 1887-1916.  
(*With acknowledgments.*)

## Hertha

I am the spirit of all that lives,  
Labours and loses and forgives.  
My breath's the wind among the reeds ;  
I'm wounded when a birch-tree bleeds.  
I am the clay nest 'neath the eaves  
And the young life wherewith it brims.  
The silver minnow where it swims  
Under a roof of lily-leaves  
Beats with my pulses ; from my eyes  
The violet gathers amethyst.  
I am the rose of winter skies,  
The moonlight conquering the mist.

I am the bird the falcon strikes ;  
My strength is in the kestrel's wing,  
My cruelty is in the shrikes.  
My pity bids the dock-leaves grow  
Large, that a little child may know  
Where he shall heal the nettle's sting.  
I am the snowdrop and the snow,



Dead amber, and the living fir—  
The corn-sheaf and the harvester.

My craft is breathed into the fox  
When, a red cub, he snarls and plays  
With his red vixen. Yea, I am  
The wolf, the hunter, and the lamb ;  
I am the slayer and the slain,  
The thought new-shapen in the brain.  
I am the ageless strength of rocks,  
The weakness that is all a grace,  
Being the weakness of a flower.

The secret on the dead man's face  
Written in his last living hour,  
The endless trouble of the seas  
That fret and struggle with the shore,  
Strive and are striven with evermore—  
The changeless beauty that they wear  
Through all their changes—all of these  
Are mine. The brazen streets of hell  
I know, and heaven's gold ways as well.  
Mortality, eternity,  
Change, death, and life are mine—are me.

NORA CHESSON.  
(*With acknowledgments.*)

## Harvest

Though the long seasons seem to separate  
Sower and reaper or deeds dreamed and done,  
Yet when a man reaches the Ivory Gate  
Labour and life and seed and corn are one.

Because thou art the doer and the deed,  
Because thou art the thinker and the thought,  
Because thou art the helper and the need,  
And the cold doubt that brings all things to nought,

Therefore in every gracious form and shape  
The world's dear open secret shalt thou find,  
From the One Beauty there is no escape  
Nor from the sunshine of the Eternal Mind.

The patient labourer, with guesses dim,  
Follows this wisdom to its secret goal.  
He knows all deeds and dreams exist in him,  
And all men's God in every human soul.

EVA GORE-BOOTH.

## Quiet

There is a flame within me that has stood  
Unmoved, untroubled through a mist of years,  
Knowing nor love nor laughter, hope nor fears,  
Nor foolish throb of ill, nor wine of good.  
I feel no shadow of the winds that brood,  
I hear no whisper of a tide that veers,  
I weave no thought of passion, nor of tears,  
Unfettered I of time, of habitude.  
I know no birth, I know no death that chills ;  
I fear no fate nor fashion, cause nor creed,  
I shall outdream the slumber of the hills,  
I am the bud, the flower, I the seed :  
For I do know that in whate'er I see  
I am the part and it the soul of me.

JOHN SPENCER MUIRHEAD.

If, as is likely, some of you have hitherto regarded the mystic as a kind of self-cheating spiritualist working only in darkness and fearing the light, I hope the few examples of mystical poetry given here will show ~~that he is a serious seeker after truth.~~ The widespread influence of mysticism on English poetry can be studied in *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*, which runs to 629 pages and contains passages from the works of 164 English poets. That an anthology so limited in its range should attain such proportions and should draw upon the works of so many poets dating from the thirteenth century onwards, is sufficient proof that mysticism is no mere passing fancy. In no age has the voice of the mystic been silent in the land. In the words of the editors of the above anthology : " It is, in fact, the hypothesis of



mysticism that it is not utterly without its witness in any age, even though the voice of that witness be lost in the turmoil of surrounding things." The present age seems favourable to an advance in spiritual knowledge, and who knows whether the greatest achievements of our time in the material world may not pale before the splendid light of some approaching spiritual revelation?

## Key to Question on p. 108.

- (a) Hey diddle diddle.
- (b) Hickory, dickory, dock.
- (c) Little Miss Muffet.
- (d) Little Jack Horner.
- (e) Mary, Mary, quite contrary.
- (f) Little Polly Flinders.
- (g) Sing a song o' sixpence.
- (h) Tom, Tom, the Piper's son.

## Key to Question 8, p. 228.

- (a) Pope, 1688-1744.
- (b) Old Ballad.
- (c) Whitman, 1819-92.
- (d) T. Lodge, 1558?-1625.
- (e) Milton, 1608-74.
- (f) Chaucer, 1340?-1400.
- (g) Sacheverell Sitwell  
(present day).
- (h) Spenser, 1552?-99.
- (i) Johnson, 1709-84.
- (j) Gerald Gould  
(present day).
- (k) Langland, 1332-1400?.
- (l) Wordsworth, 1770-1850.

